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Autumn

Number 139

March - May 2007

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Earth Garden

SUSTAINABLE LIVING WITH COUNTRY OR CITY ALTERNATIVES

**Autumn Organic Garden Advice
From Jackie French**

**Build Your Own
\$50 Solar Food Dryer:
Perfect For
Harvest Gluts**



Alanna's Chook Column

Communal Garden Oasis

Bath Animal Trough

Colour Land Lines

Weekend Hippy

Luscious Pear History

Jill Redwood: 'Recycle'

Water Conservation Ideas

Earth People Write and more . . .

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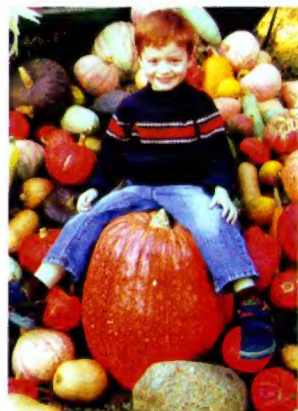
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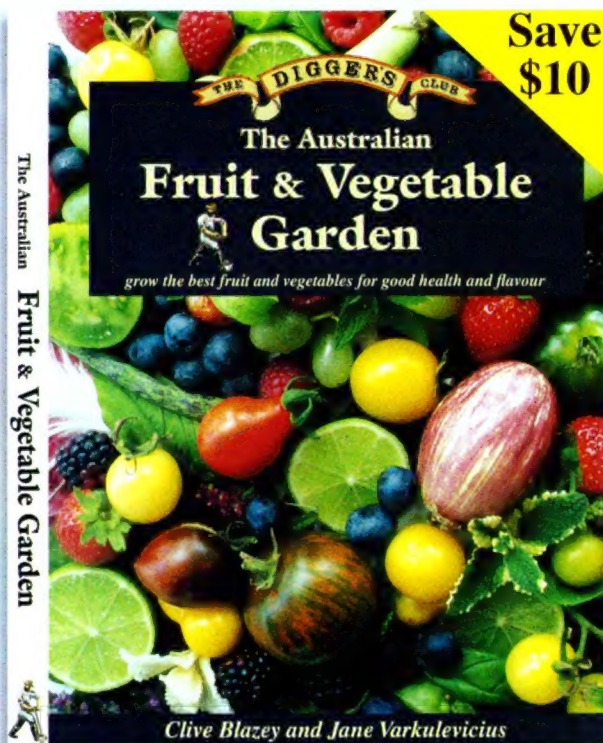
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Front Cover: Autumn vegie harvest! Judith (left) and three year old Adelaide Gray pick beans and spread mulch in grandpa's bountiful, late-February 2006 vegie garden.

Earth Garden

SUSTAINABLE LIVING WITH COUNTRY OR CITY ALTERNATIVES

Number 139

March – May 2007

For autumn organic gardening thoughts and ideas see Jackie French's ever-entertaining column, *Season By Season*, starting on page 20.

EcoTax: This issue's EcoTax will go to Permaculture North in Sydney to help them maintain their wonderful volunteer campaigns in spreading the word about ways of living sustainably in the Sydney region. You can read more about Permaculture North in *Bush Telegraph* on page six.



Beyond The Bitumen . . . 4

Earth People Write . . . 5



Bush Telegraph . . . 8

Harvest from Your Mail Box . . . 11

by Wendy Bishop

Build Your Own Solar Food Dryer . . . 12

by Peter Pedals

Solar Drying Adventures . . . 13

by Chris Lasota



Confessions of a Weekend Hippy . . . 14

by Liz Ingham

Straw Bale Building Workshop . . . 16

by John Glassford

Wee Bit Of Water Conservation . . . 18

by Alanna Moore

Season By Season . . . 20

with Jackie French



Chook Gallery . . . 24



From Spade To Blade . . . 26

with Gary Thomas

**Mud Brick Making
Through the Eyes of a Child . . . 28**

by Evelyn Tracey and Andrew Cole

My Quest For Gold . . . 30

by Wendy Bartlett

Living In Fowl Times . . . 32

by Alanna Moore



Flour for Bread Making . . . 36

by Liz Garson

Uncommon Fruits & Vegies . . . 38

by Keith Smith



**Recycling:
understanding the materials cycle . . . 40**

by Jill Redwood

Wildlife In My Life . . . 43

by Georgina Beach



Looking After the Bush . . . 44

by Lincoln Kern



Questions & Answers . . . 46

with Jackie French

Urban Oasis in Flemington . . . 50

by Amadis Lacheta



What's Your Problem . . . 54

with Bob Rich

A Bathtub Drinking Trough . . . 56

by Allan James and Kate O'Dwyer

Permaculture in Hindsight . . . 58

by Bruce Hedge



Neutralising Carbon Online. . . 60

by Alan T Gray

Bird Wars – the Gardeners Strike Back! . . . 61

by Peter McDonald

Living With Your Local Koala . . . 62

by Gail Bruce

Great Nana Technology . . . 64

by Margaret Currie



Earth Garden Reviews . . . 68

Edited by Judith Gray

Earth Garden UNCLASSIFIEDS . . . 70



LANDLINES and House And Farm Sitting . . . 73

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Founded by Keith & Irene Smith, 1972.

EARTH GARDEN is Australia's original journal of sustainable living and alternatives. It is a forum of practical ideas, shared knowledge, sources and a guide to alternatives to high-consumption lifestyles.

It's about putting a roof over your head, growing your own food organically, aiming for appropriate, renewable home energy systems and surviving — and thriving — in the city or the bush, with the inner changes which follow when you're in harmony with Nature.

EcoTax: each issue we donate a portion of the cover price to a community group involved in conservation or social justice projects to help balance the use of the paper used for printing *Earth Garden*. We would like to see all publishers pay an EcoTax.

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Beyond The Bitumen

Dear readers,

Welcome to the autumn issue of *Earth Garden*. What a summer season it's been for so many readers! No rain-fall, bushfires, power blackouts, parched gardens and the constant slop of shower water bucketed out onto the garden (how's your back?).

It seems as though mainstream Australia has awoken with a bang to some of the issues Earth Gardeners have been tackling for years. Al Gore's documentary movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*, has been a major catalyst for many people. So it's a relief to see people — many for the first time — thinking about where their power comes from, where their water comes from, and whether the sources of life's basic commodities are sustainable. Environment groups are reporting a huge upswing in interest from the general public and *Earth Garden's* circulation has been steadily rising in the past six months or more (and we thought it was all that hard work and colour we're introducing — hmmmph!).

At the same time as climate change has become an issue that mainstream Australia is beginning to consider, 'user pays' water bills and the drought have focussed people's minds on water conservation too. The days of just turning on a tap — or turning on a switch — and 'Mother Nature' providing seem to be gone. We are all thinking carefully about how we generate our power and provide our water needs.

I suppose the big challenge in all this is to make sure that this general community concern gets translated into practical action by our politicians. How to do we translate community concern into worthwhile rebates for people who go solar, install water tanks, build super-insulated homes and minimise their 'carbon footprint'? Even better, how do we make sure that these things are 'normal' and not

The Earth Garden Path

Wow! What a dramatic take off for *Earth Garden's* new, free, online network, the Earth Garden Path. More than 320 people have registered at www.earthgarden.com.au in a few short months and have been busily sharing tips, advice, recipes, water-saving, money-saving and power-saving ideas, and much more. There is a wonderful list of forums to participate in — or simply read through — and all readers are welcome to join the Path. Some of the most active forums include: Earth People Write, Chooks!, Gardeners' Link Up - Help!, Frugal Living, Recipe ideas, Wanted and for sale, 'Internet access, ISPs, satellites & phones for remote living', Biostructures, Joining members welcome, Backyard livestock and food production, 'What are you reading?', Permaculture, Gardening, biofuels, renewable energy and much more. It's a great way to get more from your *Earth Garden* between issues.

just what Earth Gardeners strive to do? The good news is that very capable environment groups like the Australian Conservation Foundation, The Wilderness Society and the conservation councils in each State are busier than they've ever been, securing agreements with State governments, local councils, and companies to help turn Australia green.

I remember that the last big upswing in environmental concern — at the end of the 1980s — was also an exciting time. Membership of environment groups grew exponentially and some very important areas of natural beauty — forests, rivers and coastlines — were saved from bulldozers. But this time it feels different because back then — even though people know about global warming — there was no serious action on renewable energy, fuel alternatives or water conservation. I'm an optimist so I'm hopeful that this time the upswing will mean lasting change to help our environment, radically reduce carbon emissions, and lead to more sustainable water use.

We can help make the most of this upswing with three simple actions this year: ring our local electricity provider and switch to 100 per cent government-accredited Green power; join an environment group to amplify the lobbying effort to turn our politicians green; and in forthcoming elections, vote for candidates who will genuinely put the environment first.

The good things that Earth Gardeners enjoy practising in their everyday lives, like a measure of self-sufficiency, are now more important than ever because they show practical, positive examples to more consumerist Australians. An *Earth Garden* lifestyle shows people that you don't have to have a miserable repetitive existence, desperately trying to eke out that last half-rotten spud from an over-worked veggie garden. This media stereotype we're all familiar with is one that is slowly breaking down in the current 'upswing' because the sorts of eco-friendly living practices we all enjoy are becoming mainstream themselves.

It's becoming more common to hear of film stars and celebrities building their new dream home with water tanks, solar panels, and passive solar design. And who doesn't compost, or at least sort their recyclables these days? As Jill Redwood quite rightly points out on page 40, this is, of course, just the start.

But let's make sure we don't get smug about this. I have no time for the self-satisfied view: "Well, it's about time the rest of Australia caught on". That attitude does nothing to save the world. We can enjoy the fact that other Australians are making the switch to a more sustainable lifestyle but they may even provide a challenge to some of us: if 'green living' is now mainstream, how do we distinguish ourselves from the mainstream? Maybe we don't need to!

I hope the articles in this issue will help your *Earth Garden* lifestyle flourish.

Happy reading,



Earth People Write is an open forum. The views expressed in letters from readers do not necessarily reflect the opinions of *Earth Garden*. Letters are always welcome, but please keep them concise.

Our favourite letter writer in this issue will receive a copy of *The Earth Garden Water Book*.

Shade-loving food plants

Dear Earth Gardeners,

I have bought half an acre of land in the Dandenong Ranges in Victoria and I am wondering if there are any particular fruit trees, berries or vegetables that may grow well under the strong filtered light of the tall eucalypts. Some areas get some full sun but it is never for extended periods of time. Due to strict local government regulations on native vegetation clearing I am unable to chop any of the trees down.

Any suggestions can be sent to bmifsud@hard.net.au. Thanks,
Brett, Sherbrooke, Victoria.

Singles on the move

Hello all,

I love *Earth Garden* magazine. I love best of all stories of people who have made a move — especially if they are single. I'm on 17 acres and manage it. It is always encouraging to hear of others in similar lifestyles. I love the new office!! All good to you all. Regards,
Christy, from the *Earth Garden* website.

Protecting Ninety Mile Beach

Hello,

I am part of an action group that owns private property along the beautiful Ninety Mile Beach in Victoria. We are at risk of losing our untouched properties and some permanent residents owing to a council-state government smokescreen ostensibly about environmental issues. A letter was recently sent to all property owners regarding a strategic plan for development, which means to take back our land for so-called eco-tourism.

Our council has recently approved a so-called eco-tourism resort waiting on the government stamp of approval. It will contain canals in a RAMSAR-listed site, 500 or more housing sites, some with their private jetty or golf course. Oil and gas companies are now allowed to dig from our precious sand dunes to save costs of

running rigs in the ocean. We have had some media attention: *Today Tonight*, articles in our local paper and radio plus a story in the *Sunday Herald-Sun*.

As a group we don't want to be connected to sewage that is pumped into our beautiful ocean. There are open drains on the main road to our properties at Dutton Downs. The small number of houses already there rely on solar and sand filter septic systems, only because council will not approve composting toilets or greywater systems.

Basically, the owners of these properties can see an amazing opportunity to keep it from harm and protect our coastal land. We need expert help and are not sure where to turn for this — we would greatly appreciate any advice to help us in our attempt to save this amazing area from over development. Thank you.

Kim Harpur, on behalf of Golden Beach Ratepayers Subcommittee Action Group. kharpur@optusnet.com.au, ph: 0428 646 000.

Non-chemical eco-toilet

Dear Earth Gardeners,

I expect to buy a campervan shortly that will have a portable toilet included. Where can I find information about ecologically-friendly ways of maintaining said contraption? I'm not interested in using the formaldehyde/smelly chemical products. Any help gratefully accepted. billrobertson@netspeed.com.au
Margaret Robertson, Giralang, ACT.

Sustainable soaps & detergents

Dear *Earth Garden* people,

To Betty Ennis: 'Handytags' does still exist but they are not making soap savers as they can't compete with cheap imports, despite the quality difference. The man I spoke to thought it was nearly ten years since they made them.

To Valerie Yule: I have an article from another magazine regarding soap powders

and grey water. The research was done by Dr Robert Patterson of Lanfax Laboratories in Armidale, NSW, <http://www.lanfaxlabs.com.au/>. In short, laundry detergents are tested for sodium salts and phosphorous. In general, liquids have no phosphorous and less than one gram of sodium per wash, compared to powders which average 20 to 40 g of sodium per wash. Best wishes to all.

Sandy Roxburgh, Miners Rest, Vic.

Strawbale interest

Dear *Earth Garden*,

Congratulations on your fantastic magazine. I finally picked one up at the local newsagent. After reading it I am hooked. The information, articles and stories are all very good reading. I think things like solar systems, greywater systems and proper insulation should be included in all new houses.

We purchased a brick veneer steel frame house on 40 acres in the last two years. But now I look at the faults. Lighting is expensive and not adequate. Insulation barely exists. House is hot in summer and cold in winter. These strawbale houses interest me a lot. Please keep up the good work so I can learn more.

Dr Perry, Yass, NSW.

Permaculture Townsville

Dear Alan and Co,

I'm happy to report that I'm finally able to enjoy life up here in Townsville. I've joined Permaculture Townsville, and now know that there are people here with whom I can relate, swapping seeds and plants, learning heaps and generally having a great time.

I have introduced *Earth Garden* to the folks up here too. When I've finished reading each issue I pass it on to our library, so it gets a second, third or even fourth viewing.

We (the Permies) are currently working on producing a little recipe book that features the ten most easily-grown vegies

and/or fruit for this area, with growing tips for the uninitiated.

Regards to you all; think about exploring the Barrier Reef!

Elenor King, Annandale, Qld.

Wanted: caretaking job, pen friends

Dear *Earth Garden* friends,

To get rid of flies on horses' faces: rub castor oil on the face — the flies stick to it and the horse can rub them off! To get rid of fruit flies — keep homing pigeons. They eat them with relish. I water all pot plants with greywater — they don't die and survive the drought.

Wanted — caretaking job on mixed property north NSW or Qld., must be over 50 acres. Also wanted — pen friends. Write to: 'Jillaroo', **Dead Bird Mission, Ashford, NSW, 2361.**

Build your own TV antenna

Dear *Earth Garden*,

Recently the best friend that I have had in 25 years had your magazine sent to me and I loved every page of it. I lived a number of years on a farm in East Texas, and have always wondered what it would be like to live that same lifestyle in Australia. The US is way too populated for my liking.

Also, I am looking for ideas on how to build a homemade TV and radio antenna. If anyone can help me it would be greatly appreciated — I will answer all about anything. My address is: 097234, U.C.I. Housing P4208, 7819 N.W. 228th Street, Raiford, Florida, 32026 U.S.A.

Burley Gillam, Florida, USA.

In defence of cities

Dear *Earth Garden*,

I am writing in defence of cities. I applaud all of you who are reducing your footprint but the majority of you seem to have moved to large areas of land in Queensland. Reducing your footprint seems to mean increasing the area of land you live on and there isn't enough land in Queensland for all of us to live as you do.

All of that lime and dolomite is mined. There must be a non-renewable hole in the ground somewhere. Cities and factories are a necessity to produce the metals, plastics, electronics and so on that make up your solar cells and rotaloos, your windows and books.

Please spare a thought for those of us who must live in those cities and work in those factories. We are not the scourge of the earth. Even in my suburban house we do our bit to reduce our footprint:

- We walk or ride bikes whenever we can and own a small car.
- We grow some of our own food.

- We recycle some of our water onto the vegie garden and never water the grass.
- We reduce/reuse/recycle and take our green bags to the store.
- We turn off lights and appliances to save electricity.
- We don't use chemicals or mined products on our garden.

Please don't look at us with too much disdain. We are a slightly necessary evil and we are still trying to do our part.

Perhaps EG could include a regular article on inner city living in each issue.

Christie Cooksey, Armidale, NSW.

Dear *Christie*,

Your defence of cities is unnecessary. It is a misconception of yours to think that 'Earth Garden' somehow regards city dwellers as 'the scourge of the earth'. For a start, many EG readers live in cities, as did I for more than ten years of my life. Most of the articles we publish in EG can be just as useful to city dwellers as those in small country towns or the bush. I hope you continue to enjoy the magazine.

Best wishes,

— Alan.

Fabulous trio from Horsham

Hi,

I'm part of a fabulous trio who have just bought two acres with an old school-house up near Horsham. We're going to be amazingly broke for the next three years while we pay it off (and pay rent at the same time) but then we'll be home free! We're planning to build strawbale bedrooms and to have an aquaponics system, as well as the usual chickens and goats, and breed dogs (not my passion but hey).

We're about 30 kilometres from Horsham, so I'm hoping to work in town and that there's some kind of bus that goes vaguely in that direction, and then I'll ride my wonderful folding bike from there, and get very fit. Meanwhile the other two parts of the trio will keep the home fires burning and engage in home businesses. So, while we'll still be living in the big smoke for a few years yet, we're hoping to meet people in and around Horsham and build up some friendly relationships, because we don't know anyone from around there. Any *Earth Gardeners* in the area?

Kath. aurelia_kr@optusnet.com.au.
From the *Earth Garden* website.

More useful than footy?

Dear *Earth Garden*,

Thanks for your Frugal Living tips — is this (I hope) a regular feature? I am completely happy with the concept of learning to use tools and getting the skills to fix things yourself.

My dad built his own house (when building was doing it yourself, not just throwing money via banks to contractors). It's still standing after three quarters of a century; it cost him a year's pay, and the current report is that it was well built which would have made him happy.

BUT learning tool skills is NOT watching some beautifully-proportioned dolly bird (or hunk) posing with the latest power tools.

It involves trial and lots of error. It involves perseverance and frustration, time and scar tissue. It is intensely satisfying. It is one of the productive pastimes, like gardening, that are so much more useful than batting or kicking balls around (ooh — unAustralian!) and you can continue just about all your life improving, saving, acquiring skills.

So — more articles like Frugal Living please.

Mark Hartridge. From the *Earth Garden* website.

Thanks Mark,

Yes, our Frugal Living tip will be a regular feature. The response has been excellent — keep them coming everyone.

— Fiona (Editorial Coordinator).

Deters birds — fun for kids

Hi,

I have a great method for deterring birds from fruit trees, which my children happened upon quite by accident one summer day. My seven-year-old daughter was playing around with some aluminium foil and folded it up to make a rectangle. She tied some string tightly around the middle to make a simple butterfly and ran around the yard flying it for a while before tying it to the apricot tree. The next time I looked up from the vegie patch her little brother had joined in and they had the whole tree covered (it's only about two metres tall). Anyway, the foil butterflies stayed and the birds, who presumably were dazzled by all that eye-blinding foil, stayed away. We didn't lose a single fruit! It makes the tree look a little bit like a Las Vegas casino at night but it's a very cheap, easy and fun activity for the kids during the school holidays and it might save you some fruit this summer. Cheers,

Virginia Tulloch, Maldon, Victoria.

Learning to lower consumption

Dear Alan,

Am settling on a piece of land today at Mt Perry in Queensland and I want to build a strawbale-infill house with solar power, rain and recycled water and toilet system and so on. Looking on the net at the moment to try to find out how, why, when.

Bit concerned about cost but trying hard to make a start. I'm a single mum trying to change my lifestyle and have had varying degrees of success with my vegie patch so far. The citrus are doing well though. Love this ideal and notice a lot of my age group are more aware than many of the 20-somethings. Looking forward to being a part of this community and spreading the word. Have a fantabulous day.

Too-Susie. From the *Earth Garden* website.

Want to overlook Lake St Clair?

Dear Earth Gardeners,

Imago Forest invites people who want to explore their artistic side or develop skills in alternative building or organic farming to share land and ideas on a beautiful timbered property overlooking Lake St Clair in the Hunter. Call Julian on 04 0301 3366. I may take a while to respond as I now live and work at Imago Forest. In the meantime, have a look at my website: <http://imagoforest.googlepages.com>.

Julian Lee. From the *Earth Garden* website.

Starting, babies' iron, bio-diesel

Dear Earth Garden,

First, for all those who can't wait to get started, we are a family of seven. We live on a quarter-acre block in town; we have 30 fruit and nut trees, and chooks and vegies. If we all moved to the bush there'd be no bush left, so people start where you are and if still unsatisfied then move.

Second, being a mum of five I have lots of experience with making baby food, but when I read articles about cooking baby's first food I noticed a very important fact left out — from six months of age baby's iron stores are about depleted. Breast milk does not contain iron so baby needs iron from food (iron for making blood and developing brain). Packaged food is iron-fortified, and a dietitian will tell you that a teaspoon of cooked mince (red meat) is all an infant requires.

For those who wish to raise their children on vegetables only, adequate iron is often a problem. Solution: cook all food in cast iron. When cooking in cast iron food becomes impregnated with iron, topping up available iron in the diet. This is the same for any vegetarian.

Third, someone wanted to know about bio-diesel courses. In Wangaratta (NE Vic.) a community house called Open Door runs a course on bio-diesel and permaculture when they have sufficient numbers. These are hands-on practical courses. I can personally recommend as I have at-

tended them. Call house coordinator Andy at Open Door on 03 5721 9175.

Kylie Ritchens, Wangaratta, Vic. faithnomoreok@yahoo.com.

Stone house designs

Hi there,

Do you know where I can purchase off-the-shelf stone house designs? I currently have your *Earth Garden Building Book* and it mentioned that RAIA stock plans. I contacted them and they say they do not have off-the-shelf design plans. We are hoping to build ourselves and require a simple design.

Charles & Lorraine McDonald. From the *Earth Garden* website.

Dear Charles and Lorraine,

Perhaps Bob Rich at bobrich@bobswriting.com can give you some leads. Good luck with your project.

— Fiona.

Nuclear nightmares

Dear Alan,

I really appreciated your 'hot comments' in the last editorial. The nuclear threat in particular is something that kept those of us who were children and teenagers during the Reagan years awake at night and despondent about the future. Although the threat has never gone away, non-proliferation treaties were supposed to be a good start. As they lose their meaning it is horrifying beyond belief that politicians in the two major parties are now smoothing out a path for nuclear power in Australia. Thanks for keeping the issue out in the public arena — and maintain the rage!

BTW — I recently had another look at the early '60s anti-nuclear film *On the Beach*; I loved seeing Melbourne's streets full of bicycles instead of cars!

Maddy Maitri, Neika, Tasmania.

Whatsitsname?

Hi,

I was about wondering if anyone knows the title of a book about eye muscle exercises to regain clearness in your sight. I think it has been around for a long time and I read about it somewhere in the last year — obscure I know, but maybe someone knows of it. With thanks. orotenburo@hotmail.com.

Louise. From the *Earth Garden* website.

Hi Louise,

I found this pretty obscure book from 1925 published online: *'Strengthening the Eyes; a System of Scientific Eye Training'* by Bernarr Macfadden at <http://www.soiland->

health.org/02/0201hyglibcat/020136eye/eye-toc.htm. Also you might want to check out http://www.stretchnow.com.au/products/vision_for_life.htm. Hope this helps.

— Fiona.

Kiwi contacts?

Dear Earth Gardeners,

After many years happily reading *Earth Garden* in Oz, we are making a big move to NZ. I hope to continue finding copies there. Could someone let me know about contacts, especially around Wellington? Groups, seed suppliers, people to share a cuppa with? *Earth Garden* is a wonderful inspiration for us; may you all grow and prosper. Cheers. hpowell@operamail.com

Heather. From the *Earth Garden* website.

NE NSW contacts?

Hi Earth Garden,

I was hoping you might be able to help us. We are currently living in the UK but are returning to Oz next year, probably June–July. We would like to stay on a community preferably near Nimbin/Lismore area — rent a dwelling or maybe live in a tipi or similar? Any help pointing us in the right direction would be really great. Love and light. mel4paul2@btinternet.com.

Mel, Wiltshire, United Kingdom.

EG rediscovered

Hi,

I discovered your magazine in the newsagent today. I was quite excited about it as I had not seen one for years.

When *Earth Garden* first started I subscribed and have (I think) the first 10 to 12 issues in my library.

Now I have discovered you again I start my collection once more.

Thanking you,

Ken Bain. From the *Earth Garden* website.

Cover to cover

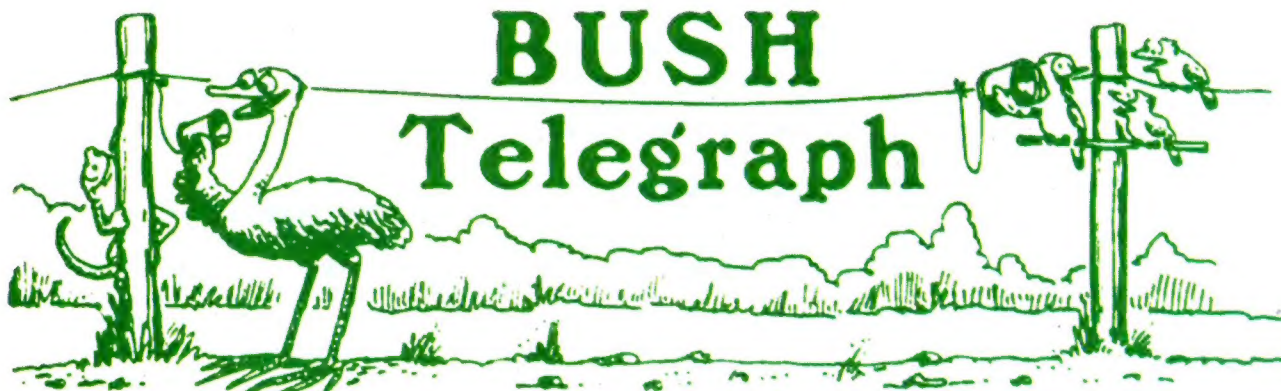
Dear Earth Garden,

I enjoy reading about how people are living their own lives. We also are owner-building our own house with solar power. We started five years ago, and are nearly finished. Whoever grabs *Earth Garden* first will read it from cover to cover before passing it on.

Thankyou.

Donald Humbler, Kilkivan, Qld.

Earth People Write
continues on page 66



Any news items which may interest Earth Gardeners may be submitted to *Bush Telegraph*. Please send notice of meetings, festivals and gatherings well in advance of the events.

Green Building, Renewable Energy Expo

The second Australian International Green Build & Renewable Energy Exhibition and Conference will be held in Sydney from Friday 1 to Sunday 3 June, 2007 at the Australian Technology Park, Everleigh. The event is bound to be a huge success, as it follows on from the National Green Build & Eco Show, in 2006. This year's event will combine those exhibitors with the best of the Australian renewable energy industry to present exciting lifestyle options for anyone building or renovating. Everything from strawbale, solar electric and hot water companies, greywater recycling possibilities, speakers, workshops and demonstrations, *Earth Garden* and 'The Good Life Book Club' and many more exhibitors will be taking part in this well-run event. For many years Sydney has been needing a show like this and it's finally here. *Earth Garden* will present a report on the show in the spring issue. Visit www.grex.com.au for more details about attending the show.

Now You're Driving With Gas

People who convert their private car to LP gas can now receive a tax free Federal Government grant of \$2000. And those buying a new, factory-fitted LPG or dual-fuel powered vehicle can receive a \$1000 grant. Conversions cost from around \$1500 to \$3400 installed, depending on the type of car and system. Around three million cars in Australia could be converted to LP gas and the scheme will run until 2014.

Senior Citizens Lead Water Saving

New research from the City of Melbourne shows that senior citizens care more about water saving than the young. The 2006 Community and Household Water Survey found that people aged 56 and over are markedly more concerned about water saving than 18 to 40 year olds. The survey of 847 Melbournians found that people aged 66 to 75 years ranked the highest for be-

lieving water saving was important while people aged 75 years+ are the most concerned about water quality and pollution. Other results from the survey show that: 45 per cent of residents had either not changed or increased their water use habits in the last year; only 5.3 per cent of residents had rainwater tanks and 1.1 per cent of residents have a grey water system in their homes; nearly 60 per cent of residents have not installed a water efficient showerhead in their bathroom.



Light Globe Switch Could Close The World's Nuclear Plants

The world's reliance on old-fashioned light globes drains more power than is produced by all the world's 441 nuclear plants. In the first detailed analysis of global energy use from lighting, the International Energy Agency has found that if every old light globe were replaced with an energy-efficient one, it would avoid more than 16,000 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions between now and 2030. The equivalent would be to take every car in the world today off the road for six years. Saving energy would even be good for the global hip pocket, saving \$3500 billion through lower energy and maintenance bills over the next 25 years.

The report shows that Australians have one of the highest *per capita* rates of lighting consumption in the world, using an estimated 62 million hours of electricity last year — equivalent to each person leaving seven 100-watt lights on year round. Our use is exceeded only by Americans (101 million hours) and the Japanese (72 million hours).

Launching the book *Light's Labour's Lost: Policies for Energy-efficient Lighting* in Paris, the International Energy Agency's executive director, Claude Mandil, warned that governments and businesses could not afford to ignore its findings.

"Without rapid action the amount of energy used for lighting will be 80 per cent higher in 2030 than today," he said. "However, if we simply make better use of today's efficient lighting technologies and techniques, global lighting energy demand need be no greater at that time." Electric lighting consumes 19 per cent of total global electricity production, slightly more than is used by all of Europe, and 15 per cent more than is generated by either hydro or nuclear power.

Australians spend \$2.5 billion a year on lighting, which accounts for 10 per cent of overall electricity consumption and 25 million tonnes of the country's annual Greenhouse gas emissions. NSW residents can receive free energy-efficient light globe packs from retailers and environment groups, which earn carbon credits in return, under the NSW Government's mandatory Greenhouse gas abatement scheme.

But there are no such schemes in other States because NSW is the only State to have carbon emissions trading. Residents of Broome in Western Australia, however, can receive four free compact fluoro globes simply by signing a form at their local shire office. This helps reduce the amount of diesel — and later this year gas — burned to power the town. Business Council for Sustainable Energy spokesperson, Richard

Wise, urged the federal and State governments to act on the International Energy Agency's findings, and follow NSW's lead.
—*The Age*

Car Rent Company Goes Green

Europcar Australia recently announced a \$250,000 commitment to offset carbon emissions from its 6,000-strong fleet of vehicles. Europcar's carbon-neutralisation campaign began with fleet supplier Subaru, and GreenFleet. When Europcar took delivery of its 836 new Subarus in early December, Greenfleet began planting 14,000 trees to offset one year's carbon emissions for each new car.

This is the first step in a roll-out that will involve more than 100,000 trees covering an area of degraded land by mid 2008. Europcar Asia Pacific CEO, Josh Green, said he hoped the move to become a greener car company would help promote environmental awareness in the car rental industry and amongst consumers.

Double Money For Supplying Solar Power To SA Grid

South Australian households with grid-connected solar-electric panels will be paid up to double the standard electricity retail price for putting surplus solar power back into the grid. Under the new SA 'Feed In rebate', customers with grid-connected solar panels gain recognition that their power — often generated at 'peak times' on hot days when the cost to generators of power can skyrocket from \$50/megawatt to \$10,000/megawatt — is extremely valuable and can avert the cost of huge new power stations just to run the State's air conditioners on a dozen hot days a year. The SA rebate is part of the government's target of reducing Greenhouse gas emissions to 60 per cent of 1990 levels by 2050, as well as increasing renewable electricity use to 20 per cent of electricity consumption by 2014. At June 30 last year South Australia had about one solar system installed in every 403 households as opposed to one in 1098 in NSW and one in 1120 in Victoria, said the Government.

"This is an excellent start by a State government. More than 30 countries throughout the world have this type of feed in law to encourage renewable energy generation. I congratulate the SA Government and urge all other State governments to implement a similar law immediately," said *Earth Garden* editor, Mr Alan T Gray.

Climate Map Draws Boundaries

Central Victorian builder and environmental activist, Per Bernard, is urging people to join an innovative new campaign to force action on climate change. "Every-

one's talking about global warming and the climate crisis - and now there's a new way to show our elected representatives we're serious. I'm part of a national campaign that's redrawing the map of Australia, so that every person concerned about climate change can stand up and be counted, wherever you live. Together, we're starting a new movement to drive the message home to politicians at all levels of government that we expect responsible leadership and bold action to solve this crisis," he told *Earth Garden* recently.

"This issue is bigger than party politics, bigger than special interests, more important than short-term economic gain — and each of us can play a part in the solution by taking a stand for our future. Now we're aiming for a record-breaking target of 250,000 people to help create a groundswell for change in every electorate across the country. I hope you'll join me — just visit the website below to add your name to the Climate Action Map now: <http://www.getup.org.au/campaign/ClimateActionNow>," said Per.



New SA Wind Farm To Power North

Work on a new \$200 million wind farm in mid-north South Australia will start in April this year. New Zealand company, Trust Power, has finalised its plans for the wind farm on the Hummocks and Barunga Ranges, west of Snowtown. Spokesperson, Graeme Purches, says 42 turbines will generate up to 88 megawatts of electricity — enough to power 60,000 households. "We think it's a very good area for a wind farm. We believe that area is possibly the very best in mainland Australia in terms of a wind resource. Mr Purches said that the wind farm is the first of what will probably be two or three stages. Trust Power is still considering building a wind farm at Sellicks Hill, south of Adelaide.
—*ABC*

World's Forests Making Comeback?

A new survey has found the cover and density of the world's forests is increasing in some countries. The survey, by the

American National Academy of Sciences, has found deforestation has either stabilised or reversed in Vietnam, Spain and India. The study also found rich nations are switching to re-forestation because they can afford to create wilderness reserves. Researchers say re-forestation has increased in almost half of the world's 50 most heavily-forested nations, including China and the United States. But forests are still disappearing in Brazil, Indonesia, Nigeria and the Philippines. One of the scientists who wrote the report, Jesse Ausubel, says the situation would be even better if two countries in particular improved their performance.

"The total loss of world forests since about 1990 was about 2 per cent and if either Indonesia or Brazil had no loss then the global balance would be even," he said. "The rest of the world since 1990 has actually increased forest cover by about 2 per cent."

'Solarise' Your Hot Water With One Phone Call

Origin Energy is a large electricity retailer operating in four States of Australia and offering five-star rated, government-accredited Green power. Origin now offer customers with money but little time the chance to convert their existing gas or electric hot water system to solar just by calling 13 24 63. Origin say you can "solarise your existing hot water service for \$2000 inc GST fully designed, supplied and installed by Origin Energy".

Humpbacks Have Human Brain Cells: Study

Humpback whales have a type of brain cell seen only in humans, the great apes, and other cetaceans such as dolphins, US researchers reported recently. This might mean such whales are more intelligent than they have been given credit for, and suggests the basis for complex brains either evolved more than once, or has gone unused by most species of animals, the researchers said. The finding may help explain some of the behaviours seen in whales, such as intricate communication skills, the formation of alliances, co-operation, cultural transmission and tool usage, the researchers report in *The Anatomical Record*.

Patrick Hof and Estel van der Gucht of the Department of Neuroscience at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York studied the brains of humpback whales and discovered a type of cell called a spindle neuron in the cortex, in areas comparable to where they are seen in humans and great apes. Although the function of spindle neurons is not well understood, they may

be involved in cognition: learning, remembering and recognising the world around oneself. Spindle cells may be affected by Alzheimer's disease and other debilitating brain disorders such as autism and schizophrenia.

The researches found spindle neurons in the same location in toothed whales with the largest brains, which the researchers said suggested they may be related to brain size.

Toothed whales such as orcas are generally considered more intelligent than baleen whales such as humpbacks and blue whales, which filter water for their food. The humpbacks also had structures that resembled 'islands' in the cerebral cortex, also seen in some other mammals. These islands may have evolved in order to promote fast and efficient communication between neurons, the researchers said. Spindle neurons probably first appeared in the common ancestor of hominids, humans and great apes about 15 million years ago, the researchers said. They are not seen in lesser apes or monkeys.

In cetaceans they would have evolved earlier, possibly as early as 30 million years ago, the researchers said. Either the spindle neurons were only kept in the animals with the largest brains or they evolved several times independently, the researchers said.

"In spite of the relative scarcity of information on many cetacean species, it is important to note in this context that sperm whales, killer whales, and certainly humpback whales, exhibit complex social patterns that included intricate communication skills, coalition-formation, cooperation, cultural transmission and tool usage," the researchers wrote. "It is thus likely that some of these abilities are related to comparable histologic complexity in brain organisation in cetaceans and in hominids."

—Reuters

Red Meat Link To Breast Cancer

A Harvard Medical School study has discovered a link between red meat consumption and breast cancer.

The researchers found that women who consumed more than one serving of red meat per day almost doubled their risk of developing some types of breast cancer, compared to those who ate fewer than three servings a week. The epidemiological study assessed the diets of more than 90,000 pre-menopausal women in their 20s, 30s and 40s over 12 years.

The findings come after years of advertising promoting the health benefits of red meat and telling Australian women, in particular, to eat more iron-rich lamb and beef. Research leader, Eunyoung Cho, says this is the first study to find an association between breast cancer and the amount of

beef, pork, lamb or processed meat women consume.

"Pre-menopausal women who ate more than 1.5 serves of red meat per day experience almost double the risk of hormone receptor positive breast cancer, compared to those who ate less than three servings of red meat per week," she said. Hormone receptor positive breast cancer is a type of cancer stimulated by female hormones such as oestrogen, and Dr Cho says there are several possible causes for the link.

"There are several possibilities — carcinogens found in cooked or processed red meat, hormone treatment of beef cattle and the type of iron found in red meat may be responsible for the association," she said. Although Dr Cho concedes more research is needed to replicate the findings, she says the study provides some grounds for reconsidering the amount of red meat consumed.

"There are several reasons for women to reduce red meat intake — it's also associated with increased risk of colon cancer so I believe our findings provide another reason for women to reduce their red meat intake," she said. Popular diets like the Atkins program and the top-selling CSIRO Total Wellbeing Diet have been pushing the benefits of protein.



Wildlife Evolving To Survive Toad

Threat: Research

Research from Sydney University's Shine Institute suggests the long-term impact of cane toads on wildlife is less destructive than first thought. The arrival of the toad in the Northern Territory has caused the populations of death adders, goannas and quolls to be drastically reduced. But researcher, Ben Phillips, says all the species under threat are evolving to cope. Many native animals initially killed by the poisonous toads are evolving and their offspring are becoming immune. He is confident the study being conducted at Fog Dam, south of Darwin, will show wildlife have the potential to be back at normal population levels within 50 years.

"Species affected badly by cane toads are still surviving where there have been toads for a long time. The most likely explanation is that all those populations have evolved — we have certainly shown that for a couple of species now," Mr Phillips says a campaign to stop the cane toad's march across the country is ineffective. "Trapping toads is a little bit like standing out here in the flood plain and swatting at mosquitoes," he said.

—ABC

Community Wind Park A First For Victoria

Victoria's first community-owned wind park is to be located near Daylesford in central Victoria, and has already obtained \$975,000 in government funding. The 4 megawatt Hepburn Community Wind Park is expected to generate enough energy to power most of the homes in the Daylesford-Hepburn area and cut Greenhouse emissions by 14,000 tonnes per year. The Hepburn Renewable Energy Association is working with Future Energy Pty Ltd to develop the project and will establish an investment co-operative to finance the wind park.

Per Bernard, the President of the Hepburn Renewable Energy Association, said over 300 members have joined the Association with an interest in supporting the wind park. The \$8 million wind park will comprise two wind turbines and is modelled on similar projects in Europe which rely on strong community support and return the economic and social benefits back to the towns. David Shapero, Director of Future Energy, has already been approached by other towns interested in building their own renewable energy plant.

Sydney's Permaculture Success

Sydney community permaculture group, Permaculture North (PN), completed a very successful and active 2006, with many activities including displays at three major shows and many smaller local events. PN now have over 200 members. Their fund raising activities have allowed them to support various permaculture projects here and overseas. PN's Eco-Van became an instant success and is now being sought by many groups for environmental displays.

The Eco-Van caravan is a mobile permaculture and environmental display and education unit, providing information and practical examples for sustainable urban living. It will highlight issues of waste minimisation, recycling, water and energy efficiency and will introduce people to ways of growing organic food at home.

To see more about the activities of PN or their Eco-Van visit their website at www.permaculturenorth.org.au.

HARVEST FROM YOUR MAIL BOX

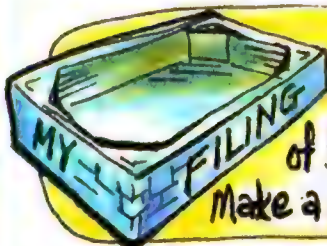
REDUCING WASTE!

thinking LOCAL!

think SMALL!



PASTE a paper label on a used envelope - to make yourself a good-as-new envelope.



COVER a cardboard tray (that fruit comes in) with pieces of blue paper from inside envelopes. Make a set of matching stackable trays.



TEAR old envelopes, junk mail, "free" newspapers into pieces & soak. Mix with paste to make modelling clay.



• **PASTE** •
Cook together
1 tablespoon flour
2 cups water. Stir
till it changes colour
from white to translucent.
• cool & use •

"**SUN STONES**"
paper clay, paint,
sealer (wax & estapol)

WS'06



BUILD YOUR OWN Solar Food Dryer

Renowned conservationist and renewable energy expert, Peter Pedals, shares his design for a thermosyphoning solar food dryer.

by Peter Pedals

Nimbin, New south Wales

IF YOU have more garden produce than you can eat you have two options: share your surplus by bartering, selling or giving it away; or preserving it for future use either by freezing it or drying it. You may of course do all of the above. The problem with long term freezing is the ongoing energy consumption and that either means Greenhouse

gas emissions or a substantial outlay in renewable energy to keep a freezer running. But an electric food dryer also consumes quite a bit of power. A cheap solution is to build your own solar food dryer.

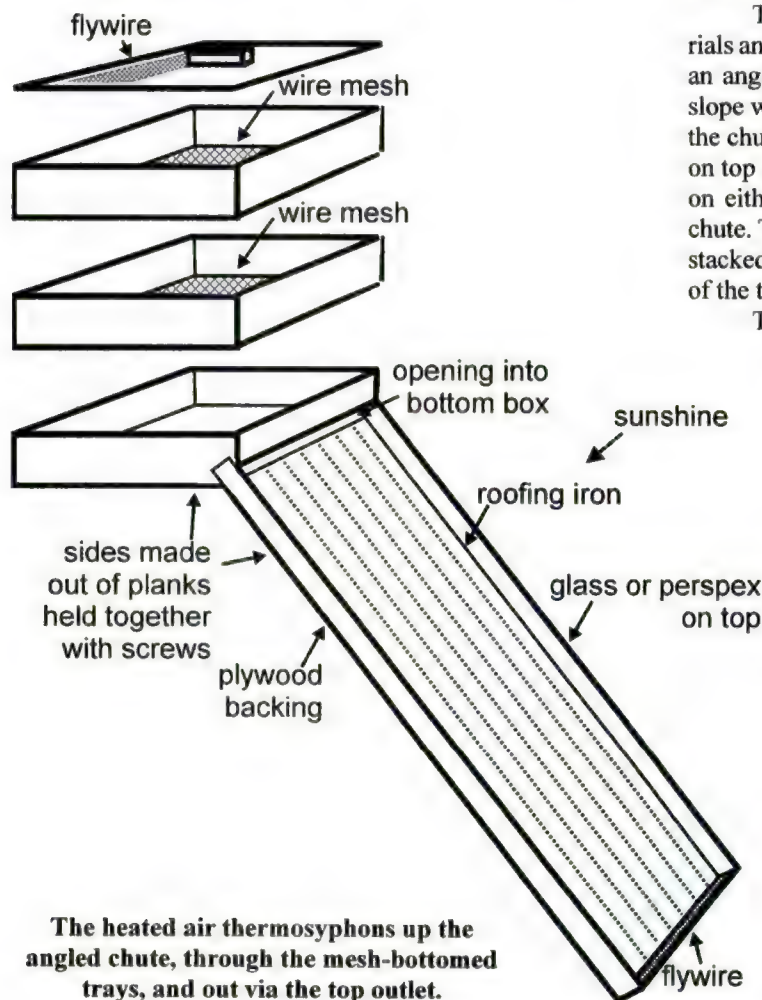
This food dryer design uses natural convection currents of air — it's based on the same principle as the thermosyphon of a solar hot water system. You will need a sheet of corrugated roofing iron, a sheet of glass or perspex of the same size, some mesh (preferably stainless steel), some plywood, planks, some matt black stove or engine paint and an assortment of screws.

The size of the food dryer can match available materials and the quantity of food to be dried. The idea is to build an angled chute of anywhere between 30 and 60 degrees slope with transparent material (glass or perspex) on top of the chute. Next, paint your roofing iron matt black, place it on top of your plywood underneath the chute, with a plank on either side to direct all the heating air to flow up the chute. The hot air will then flow through one or more boxes stacked on top of each other with an opening on the far side of the top box out of which the heated air can escape.

The air inlet at the bottom of the chute and the air outlet on the top box should have flyscreen on them. Each food drying box should have a mesh fine enough to stop the food falling through it screwed to the bottom and such that several boxes can be stacked on top of one another with a lid for the top box with a flyscreen air vent built into it. The solar collecting chute must be several times the area of the mesh at the bottom of each box.

The chute is rested against a table, chair, verandah or anything that will allow you to face the chute towards the sun and place the food drying boxes on a level surface. The top of the chute connects to a sealed base that rests on the horizontal surface with an open top on top of which the food drying boxes are placed. See the accompanying diagram for the details that are hard to put into words.

By preparing organically grown, solar dried, vegetarian food you are partaking in a very important demonstration which shows the way towards a sustainable lifestyle.



Solar Drying Adventures

Now's the time of year to preserve harvest or market gluts of great produce. And you can turn an old timber pallet into a solar food dryer for about \$50 following Chris's advice.



Chris's solar dryer hard at work drying capsicum, carrots, and tomato slices.

by Chris Lasota
Kilmore, Victoria

WAS it being eco-friendly or just cheap? I picked up an old, discarded pallet, turned it upside down, cut some old corrugated iron to size and screwed it into place between the 'pallet feet'. Some plywood around the edges sealed the whole thing off with the bottom plywood slightly wider providing a lip, on which the glass would rest. Painted black, it was ready to catch as much sun as possible.

I bought some aluminium fly screen framing material from the local hardware shop and cut them to size to fit between the pallet feet. Using fiberglass fly screen (not metal: food acid will eat metal meshing) the frames were now complete. This frame is very easy to clean and if your mesh gets too dirty you can just replace it very cheaply. I bought two pieces of glass to put on top. I originally had one piece but two pieces makes it easier to handle. All up the cost was about \$50.

Three years later

I have been using my humble little solar dryer now for about three years. I started out semi-drying the glut of summer tomatoes from my garden (Roma tomatoes work well) and put them in jars with olive oil, garlic, bay leaves and various other herbs.

Next I dried my tomatoes completely. I then ground these shrivelled up pieces of tomato using a small herb/coffee grinder. This powder is great on pizzas or sprinkled in stews or to make your own dip. I keep the little silicon sachets that come in taco packs as these help keep my 'powders' dry.

I have successfully powdered tomatoes, mush-

rooms, chillies, capsicums, celery and lemons and no doubt there are many others to try. Dried strawberries are a favourite with my kids along with pineapple and bananas. While bananas were wildly overpriced we were still enjoying our dried bananas, which we had bought (obviously) when they were cheap. Cyclone Larry eat your heart out.

My wife yearned for fresh pineapple juice so we started juicing whole pineapples. Although the waste went to our chooks I knew there had to be a better way. I cut the outside skin off the pineapple and gave that to the chooks. I juiced the rest of the pineapple and this time the 'waste' pineapple I laid out on baking paper and put under the dryer. My wife got her fresh juice and my kids ended up with nutritious fruit roll ups.

When drying fruit that can go brown like apples or pears, dunk your cut up fruit in lemon juice or a citric acid/water mix. This stops a lot of the discolouration and makes the end product more appealing. Another upside of drying your food is the reduced cost of storing as you can put your produce in a cupboard instead of using electricity to freeze it. Even then you can't freeze some things. When was the last time you successfully froze your celery?

The possibilities are limited only by your imagination. My daughter recently got the baking-bread-at-home bug. When letting the dough rest before baking guess where it goes? After all, the instructions did say place in a warm place.

I hope you have as many happy hours with your dryer as we have with ours.

PS: Still trying to think of a use for dried pumpkin.

Confessions of a Weekend Hippy

— Autumn 2007 —



On weekdays a corporate high-flier, at weekends a vegie-growing philosopher, Liz finds herself in her prolific garden faced with the imminent drying of her dam, which somehow mirrors the fluctuations of her friend's election hopes.

by Liz Ingham
Yarraville, Victoria

I'M THINKING about the gate of a fenced garden. The gate I'm thinking of is made of tall planks of wood, painted with a swamp wallaby to remind me why I need to keep it shut, and a neat sign above head height for the visitors. When I arrive in Clydesdale each weekend, I walk the dirt path between the Termite Shed and a dry basalt outcrop, and reach out my hand for the gate. Another step forward and I can see nothing but wooden planks, then a click and another step, and I'm in a different world; a green world, of brightness and colour and generosity.

Leaves nod and sway, skinks flash their shiny skin in the dappled light and fruit swells on the vine. This is the place where a pale brown tree-frog will sleep off the heat between tightly-packed sorrel leaves that I've long since stopped pretending to grow for any other reason. Here, this year's pumpkin vine scrambles up the trunk of a Grey Box tree, whose peeling bark shelters last year's lizard eggs. Here and there the blue splashes of lavender and echinacea are bumped around by bees, and the globe of an onion flower sticks its neck out above the tomato jungle, and makes me laugh.

I love coming back here each week, and opening the gate. Each week the same contrast of sun-bleached wood giving way to live plant. Such a utilitarian concept, a vegie plot, but it brings such richness and abundance. You understand this, you Earth Gardeners, how I could have a rose tucked away up the back and hardly think to look at it, and don't care that a possum eats it, when there are eggplants ripening and work to be done, and you

know there is always work to be done.

You understand what I'm about to say now also, that if the dam dries up next month, as it probably will, and all my annual crop is lost to the heat, I won't regret a minute of the time I spent in the garden. Not a moment mulching, or seeding, or transplanting. Not a spadeful of compost. I'll feel sad and all that, but I won't regret it, and I'll still feel I gained more than I lost, and since you know exactly what I mean, I don't even need to explain it.

In the city, it's another story. In the city, I would have to translate this column into Gardening as a Second Language, by coming up with some sort of cost-benefit, or bring in health and fitness, you know, weight-bearing exercise for

bone density or something. Or "look at all this garlic, it's \$40 a kilo in the organic shop", like I cared about that when I planted it. You know why I planted it, because you planted it too, or dreamed of it. The plaits of garlic hanging up in the larder are like the punch-line of a good joke about growing garlic, except that nobody other than a gardener gets the joke, because it goes something like "once there was a gardener, right, and they grew this garlic, right, and the spears grew longer and the bulbs grew fatter and they harvested it mid-summer just in time to turn the bed over for melon seedlings".

I realised half way through writing this, why I was writing it. It's not about the dam drying up; well it is, sort of, but, ah, look at this hideous object: there is a painfully clunky metaphor stomping around before my very eyes, so it's time to fess up.

I was silly enough to let on in my last Confession that I gave my heart and soul to campaigning ahead of the Victorian election. You know, forests, greenhouse, water,



Perpetual leek bulbs hang next to ironing board brekkie table ready to plant when the drought breaks.

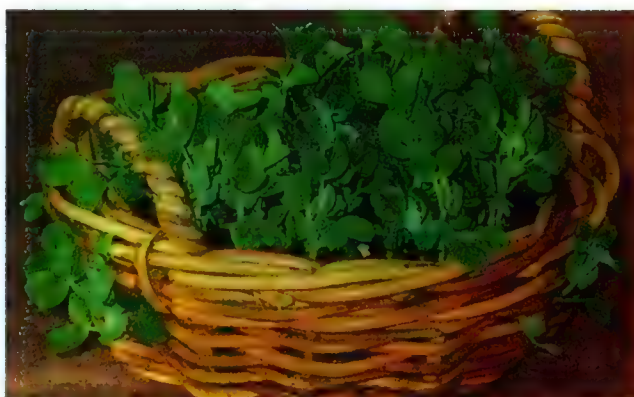
save the earth, that sort of thing, and it didn't go very well, particularly the forests bit. Particularly the forest bit. Metaphorically, you see, the dam dried up. But I don't regret trying. I'd do it all again tomorrow. Well, maybe not tomorrow, and possibly not the next day, but — theoretically — you know what I mean.

And if you think all that is just too Chance the Gardener for words, let me tell you that the day after the election, I listened in while Bob Brown explained his experience of parliament to the two new Greens MPs. And I'm not making this up; he was using the example of how chickens in a chicken coop will attack any other chicken that shows a sign of weakness. Yes, really. "Be careful", he was saying, in his solemn, measured way, "it's a chicken coop in there".

Meanwhile, back in the other world, if the summer garden's run out of puff, never mind, because it might rain later on, and in the meantime you can grow mung bean sprouts. Oh, don't roll your eyes, they're crispy and sweet, and really very water efficient when you consider the yield. Anyone can eat their own homegrown food every day. Also, I bought a bag of dried peas, and I've been growing them in compost in sweet little cane baskets from the op-shop, so they double as table ornaments. You can snip the stalks if you have the heart to, and you can even pour your mung bean rinse water onto your pea sprouts, which is equal parts efficient and neat.

Also, in autumn we have the opportunity of growing those Just-Add-Water plants, like perpetual leeks and garlic shallots. Perpetual leeks taste like the real thing, but they act differently. In summer, the ones you didn't eat in spring start to form a bit of a bulb and little bulblet offshoots, and if you let them dry up, they'll actually go dormant so you can store them until it rains, and give some away, like my neighbour Beth did to me. There's no comparison between the speed of starting a leek from a tiny seed, or setting loose the energy packed into a dormant bulb. A month or two after it rains, you'll have great sturdy leeks in the garden, looking like they've been growing there all summer.

This drought won't last forever, as we gardeners know. I'm going to sit it out here for a while, but when the



Pea sprouts: homegrown food and handy table ornaments.

rain comes, releasing the frogs from their hidey-holes, I'll be ready for it, with my tray of seedlings and my perpetual leek bulbs, ready to scatter a little green about the place.

Stop press: I wrote this article on Tuesday night, after hearing that a three-week vote count had been completed, and my friend Colleen Hartland had not been elected to parliament. Despite a long and arduous campaign on important local issues, she lost by 76 votes. I was her campaign manager. She ended up winning after a recount the next day, which put her in parliament as one of three Victorian Greens MPs.

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Straw Bale Building Workshop

by John Glassford
Ganmain, NSW

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• John Glassford and Susan Wingate-Pearse
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Some of the workshop students raising the walls.

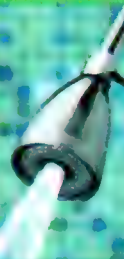


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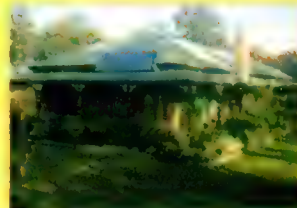
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Wee Bit Of Water Conservation

At this time of drastic water shortages, suggestions of ways of conserving the stuff are reaching flood proportions, so to speak. Alanna, meanwhile, is made of stern stuff, and offers an overlooked strategy for coping with the crisis and helping the garden grow too.

by Alanna Moore
Castlemaine, Victoria

WITH RAINFALL in many parts of Australia down to about half the expected average, we need to take on some serious behavioural changes if we want to survive the 21st century. Not using water wastefully, conserving it and saving it to use for a higher good, is something that we can all do in our own homes.

The days of hosing concrete clean with drinking grade water are over. (In many regions with water restrictions you would now be breaking the law to do this.) That may be an extreme example. I reckon that a majority of people are wasting criminal amounts of water down the drain every single day in their homes without much thought. I'm referring to the inappropriate technology of the flush toilet. It's sooo the last two millennia!

The ancient Romans supposedly advanced civilisation with their attention to sanitation. They may have been a whizz at plumbing, but it was plumbing that did them in too. Drinking water out of lead pipes saw to that.

Here, in the driest of continents, we are throwing away vast quantities of fresh water, our most precious resource, with techniques suited to less arid areas, just because we are expected to 'flush and forget' about it. And there's something else being lost that people find is a subject too delicate to air. But I'd like to yell it from the top of every soapbox:

"Wee will fertilise!!"

If you are a gardener you'll know that soil needs regular feeding, particularly if intensive food production is the goal. The production and long haul transport of commercial fertiliser usually involves a high degree of unsustainability. As an ethical gardener you might ask — where is the most sustainable source of nitrogen for use on plants?

Well, search no longer. Just stop flushing your urine down the toilet and pee in a special bucket instead (ideally with a lid and spout). You can also chuck in the soupy washing up water left in the basin you keep in the sink. (Go easy on soaps and detergents and choose brands wisely.) And add the water that you collected while waiting for the hot shower water to come through. Not to mention topping it all up with some rainwater from your tank. Collecting garden water shouldn't be seen as extra work — more an Earth citizen's sacred duty!

By evening you would have collected a wicked brew to pep up your plants with. Water it around the root zones,

trying to avoid getting it on leaves. Vegetables, in particular, will love it! Potatoes will go berserk! So will onions, peppers, celery and carrots, and anything else that loves a good dose of potassium, phosphorus and all the other juicy minerals that come with the urine.

A dilution of up to five parts water to one of urine can be used, although native plants may well prefer it weaker (certainly they tend to be touchy about phosphorus). Try not to splash it on any leaves or vegetables that you are about to eat. Little seedlings would prefer to be watered with a weaker, say, 10:1 dilution. Always use your brew fairly fresh or it will start to pong. And give plants this weak urine solution often, daily should be okay, for instant green thumbs!

It is estimated that the average adult produces enough nitrogen in their urine to fertilise around 300 square metres of garden (applied at the annual rate of 70 kg of nitrogen per acre/0.4 ha.) So this is both a good financial saving, compared to buying in fertiliser, as well as an environmental win.

Another great way to use urine is to compost it first. You can regularly drench your compost heap with it, sprinkling it in a dilute form. Another method is to half fill a 20-litre bucket with sawdust for your wee bucket. When it's damp and starting to smell, tip it all onto your compost heap and spread it around as a thin layer, ideally. If you have a lot of materials that are slow to break down (bundles of weeds, shredded paper or cardboard, straw — all rich in carbon) this brew will really give the composting process a kick start! Sawdust itself is normally very slow to break down, unless a good source of nitrogen is present.

Is it safe?

Pathogen levels in urine are generally negligible, certainly when compared to faeces. Urine is even consumed by people doing urine therapy or when lost in the desert, so it can't be too bad. (Harold Tietze, in Bermagui, NSW, has written popular books on the subject of urine therapy.)

However in terms of local planning laws, it's a bit of a grey area (as are many other 'new' ideas at first viewed with suspicion). So it's best to avoid discussing using urine with environmental health inspectors. Ten years ago, when I was employed by a local council to teach compost making, we always waited until the council people were out of earshot before discussing the benefits of urine in compost. Maybe things have changed by now, but I doubt it. (One day the authorities will catch up with the grassroots home environmentalists. Perhaps this will be when all the old-style engineers have become fully fossilised!)



Although there's no shortage of water in New Zealand, this is evidently how they water the garden kiwi-style.
Photo Colleen Tunnicliff.

Who else doesn't like your urine?

Worms in worm farms and vermi-compost heaps really don't like to take a 'golden shower' and dry compost toilets are preferably kept urine-free too. By separating the urine and using it in a positive way it's a win-win solution to tackling environmental abuse!

However people who are sick (for example, with a urinary tract infection) or taking medications may not want to use their urine in case of unwanted side-effects. But if they compost it first, this shouldn't be a problem, as any pathogens will be broken down in the process.

Because of its high salt and acid loads, undiluted urine can burn and kill the leaves of your plants. (This is

why there is a country tradition of men weeing underneath the lemon tree, not on it.) This deadly attribute can be used to advantage to get rid of weeds if you spray urine onto their leaves several times, and, ideally, do it on hot, sunny days.

And full strength urine can be sprayed on fruit trees when they are dormant, to protect against mildew, apple scab and fungal diseases.

Urine is also a good deterrent against marauding deer, I've read. (Has anyone tried this for native Australian animals, I wonder?) A few pails of urine placed in corners and the middle of the garden does the trick, apparently.

Apart from them, your garden will love you, and Mother Earth too, if you always remember that "wee will fertilise!"

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• This is an extract from Alanna Moore's forthcoming book – 'The Wisdom of Water', Python Press. Information at www.geomantica.com

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Borrowing Water, and How Not to Believe Six Impossible Things Before Breakfast

THERE were six of us for dinner, the mist dripping off the roof (not quite as good as rain, but it still gives us a few centimetres in the water tanks) and Mothball wombat outside shrieking at a wallaby daring to take a bite out of her favourite kikuyu patch.

And somehow, as we ate our pannecotta with cherries and blueberries stewed with vanilla (or vanilla-scented dianthus flowers, anyhow) the conversation veered to climate change, and the things we should give up, but couldn't.

Helen's was her evening bath — the whole bathtub full of scent and warmth and water (and Helen, of course). Except, as Bryan and I pointed out, there was no need to give it up. If she lived in Sydney, all that lovely water would be heading down the drain and out to sea. But Helen isn't using the water — she's only borrowing it. She bathes in it, then it's either recycled onto her garden (where she doesn't water in the heat of the day so 90 per cent doesn't evaporate) or goes back into the water table.

If you only borrow water — and make sure that none is lost to evaporation or is polluted by salts or soap or detergents — then you may as well use as much as you like. And if it's heated by solar panels on the roof — well, the sun will be pumping out the same amount of heat whether she taps into a bit of it for her bath or not.

There are two great myths about living a sustainable lifestyle. The first is that our standard of living is going to have to fall. Our lives will become grey and meaningless, while we squat in a mud hut.

And the second is that it's impossible.

There's magic in the word *impossible*. It means we don't have to try.

I've lost count of the number of ecologically-positive things that are supposed to be impossible:

- It's impossible to grow as much food without pesticides or fungicides. (Oh yeah? Then why does productivity go up — not down — in countries that reduce pesticide use? Answer: pesticides kill the predators that control the pests. A reliance on pesticides and fungicides INCREASES pest problems.)

- It's impossible to grow fruit and vegies without shooting/trapping/poisoning wildlife. (Of course it's blasted well possible. It may be impossible with conventional growing methods. But if you grow decoy fruits, plus a dozen other strategies, you'll both intensify production and feed the non-human owners of the land.)

- All meat and egg production is ecologically unsustainable and inhumane. (Tell that to our pampered grasshopper and fallen fruit-eating chooks.)

- It'd cost at least \$60,000 to have a house powered by solar power. (Well, only if you design a house that gulps power like Elvis guzzled fried peanut butter and banana sandwiches.)

Ten Ways to Borrow

But back to the borrowing — often when we think of saving the planet we think of things that we need to do without. But there are some things our world is rich in (like human labour). And there are others, like Helen's bathwater, that we do in fact just borrow.

Life is extraordinarily short — and the world still so wonderfully generous with her delights. Every day we spend on this planet should be a celebration. And with a combination of using the world's surplus (us) and 'borrowing' you can still have a gloriously lavish life, with, just as a few examples:

- Any wooden furniture, as long as the wood is harvested sustainably. (That is, borrowed — one day your furniture will turn back to soil but till then it's one of the pleasantest ways possible to sequester some carbon.)
- A mural for the bathroom ceiling, or recycled stained glass windows.
- A string quartet or bagpipe band to play for your birthday.
- As much live theatre as you can cram into one full life.
- Music, of every sort and description (this includes singing in the bath).
- Bushwalks
- Sailing, rowing, or doing a Cleopatra and hiring 120 galley slaves to do it for you, preferably with rose-scented sails.
- Plants of every variety. (Unless they have been reared in greenhouses with extravagant water and trucked 1,000 km to get to you, except for a few treasures you can't get otherwise).
- Dinners with friends, as lavish as your skill, their patience and your garden allows.
- Sitting yakking in cafes, especially those that sell a good

(local) tomato bruchetta, heavy on the basil and garlic.

- Clothes made with art, from sustainable cloth and dyes (not bulk made polyester fashions that will turn to tatters after three good washes).
- Ditto shoes.
- Technology centres where you can read the day's news without wasting part of a tree, and keep up with friends and like-minded souls as well.
- Libraries.
- Large quantities of the best fruit your district can grow.

PS: There were a few other things we didn't want to give up.

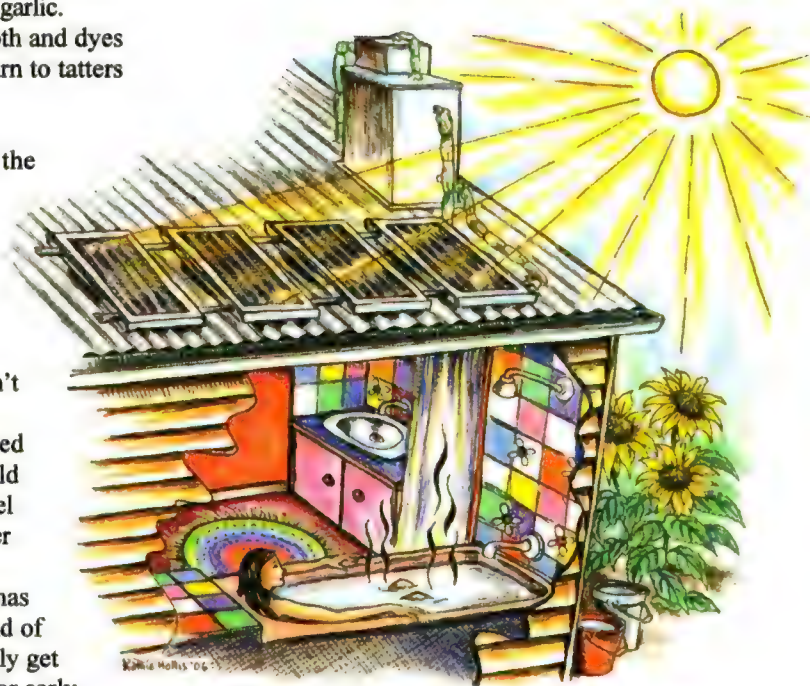
Virginia didn't want to lose her heated towel rail. Bryan pointed out that she could have underfloor heating — and a heated towel rail — from solar heating panels, using either water or heating oil.

Me? I don't want to give up my Christmas watermelon. Our melons only ripen at the end of summer, if we're lucky. But one day I'll finally get round to making a nice recycled greenhouse for early small melons.

Of course there were many other things we didn't mention: our cars, long distance travel, computers. But there are already technical solutions to all those. Maybe in another decade or even less I'll be driving my little solar buggy (made from new generation sewage and recycled hard plastic, just like it's hard plastic computer system) to take Helen to her solar-powered monorail to pick up the fast wind-powered clipper to take her to ... who knows?

In Praise of 'fresh'

Every food you buy these days is 'fresh'. 'Fresh from our farm to you' says the label on the three-year-old packet of frozen spinach. Just about every café or hotel has 'fresh orange juice' on their menu. Sometimes they even have 'fresh squeezed', which combines the maximum of lies in the minimum of words. The fruit wasn't fresh, the juice wasn't fresh, and it wasn't 'squeezed' either, but com-



Solar panels heating water for a bath.

mercially squished, squashed and squoozled. (Squoozled is a combination of squished and bamboozled. The fruit is squished, the customer bamboozled.)

Fruit in supermarkets *looks* fresh. But it usually isn't.

The trouble is there is no real standard for fresh. Like 'home baked', 'farm fresh' or 'handmade', it carries connotations but no real meaning.

So what fruits *can* be stored and still taste good? Basically, fruit falls into three ripening categories:

1. Fruit that *has* to be eaten fresh, and doesn't get any riper at all after it's been picked. (In fact this lot *lose* flavour from the moment they're separated from their tree.)

Cherries, dates, blackberries, grapes, all citrus, olives, pineapples, raspberries, strawberries and watermelons — they get all their sugar from their parent plant so the fresher they are, the better they'll taste. Cold storage may keep them from rotting for a while — but they'll still lose flavour.



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With all of these fruits the aromatic flavour compounds aren't produced once fruit is off the tree. And those astringent and bitter compounds in fruit that fade away when they ripen on the tree stay there when fruit is picked too soon.

Of course, they can be dried, which concentrates the flavour and sweetness. Or frozen. Or made into jams or jellies or chutneys. Humans are good at turning ephemeral crops into long-lasting yumminess. (Like last year's pickled zucchini, or last summer's tomatoes, as they slowly ripen indoors on a few sheets of newspaper to soak up the juices of any that go rotten. And a well-made Christmas pud is even better six months later (Do not try this in hot humid weather!))

But none of the fruits in this category are any good after long weeks in cold storage, slowly turning into cardboard but with more squish.

2. Fruit that *looks* like it's getting riper — but isn't.

Some fruit *looks* riper and grows softer after it's picked, but it still loses flavour from day one.

Apricots, blueberries, rockmelons, persimmons, nectarines, peaches, plums, medlars, tomatoes ... you may as well eat them straight away, even the green tomatoes, as they won't get any sweeter even if they look like they're getting riper.

These fruits are a joy to the fruit industry, as they can be picked very green and slowly look like they're getting ripe till they get to you. Warning: avoid all these in supermarkets!

3. Fruit that does ripen after picking.

Ah, now these fruit are beloved of all self-sufficient farmers with superior taste buds, because most of these get better after picking:

Apples (early apples usually need to be eaten very fresh — even the same day as you pick them — or they go soft, floury or taste like turpentine. But the later the apple, the better they are after a few months storage. Sturmer Pippin, Lady Williams, Yates, they are really best all nicely wrinkled, but still so crisp and sweet they are a joy, eaten maybe with celery, walnuts and vinaigrette dressing, or just crunched as they are), custard apples, pears (I always pick pears unripe and ripen them in a cool, dark place. They go floury when they're left to ripen on the tree.) quinces (late maturing quinces will perfume the house for months, kiwi fruit (ditto), mangoes, paw paw,

sapote. All these convert sugar from their parent plant into starch and, as they soften after picking, they then convert some of the starch back to sugar.

The trouble is that the fruit industry has taken advantage of this. The fruits are still picked too green — as soon as they've come to almost full size — and stored long past their real storage life. (I've seen Delicious apples sold as 'New Season' in December in one major supermarket chain — when they'd have been picked in the previous February!)

Long cold storage followed by ripening with ethylene gas — which is what happens to most of our shop-bought fruit — means that the fruit has less sugar, less flavour and, in most cases, less crispness too, unless they have been picked so green that they stay hardish — which is quite different from that lovely crispness when a fruit breaks off in your mouth, all squirting juice.

Actually there is one other category — number 4, with avocados and bananas in it.

Avocados only soften off the tree, though cold storage slows down their ripening too at the cost of most of the flavour and a lot of the creaminess. Bananas ripen well in bunches off the tree too.

But again, both avocados and bananas are usually picked far too young. The closer to ripe that they're allowed to become on their parent, the better the flavour and the richer their flesh.

PS: It's not enough to have 'healthy' food in kids' tuck shops either. It needs to actually taste good. I've never had an edible apple from a school tuck shop, and I used to visit a lot of schools. They were all picked too green, too hard and had an almost turpentine flavour or some were floury and tasted rather like flannel. And I *love* fruit. Those things would turn any right-tasting kid off fruit for life.

What to Plant in Autumn

(For temperate and cool to cold climates. The tropics have their own rhythms!)

Autumn here means planting. The worst of the summer's heat is over (I hope), the air cooling but the ground still warm.

Things suddenly start growing in autumn. About



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60 per cent of a year's growth in southern climates happens in spring, and about 30 per cent in autumn. Except in a drought, of course, when 95 per cent happens after rain.

This is the time to plant masses of fast-maturing stuff to eat over winter and slower-maturing vegies to eat in spring, plus lots of trees and shrubs while they still have time to get established before the cold of winter.

Fast maturers

Spinach. If the soil still feels warm when you stick a couple of fingers in it, try spinach — real English spinach, not the smaller, hardy New Zealand spinach or big-leafed silver beet. Real spinach leaves are smaller, softer and more delicate than silver beet and run to seed in hot weather, though new varieties are a bit more bolt-resistant.

The taste is delicate and delicious and they are worth the effort.

If you want to go ultra-trendy, plant a plot (or a box) of 'baby spinach' leaves. Scatter the seeds thickly and pick them no bigger than your little finger. In hot climates grow your spinach in dappled shade; in cold climates in the warmest, sunniest spot you have and in temperate climates cross your fingers and hope you don't get a cold snap followed by a hot spell, or the plants will run to seed before you get a feed.

What else? Masses of onions, including spring onions. (As I write this there's a pot of onion relish slowly stewing — red onions sliced into olive oil, cooked ultra slowly till very soft, add a scatter of brown sugar and a few drops of red wine or balsamic vinegar. Cook again till thick — only a few more minutes. A chilli or two is a good addition. I'm serving this lot on tiny pizzas spread with homemade ricotta, with maybe a leaf or two of thyme scattered on top.)

Sorry about that — a short pause for salivation. (It's nearly lunchtime.) What else to grow that's fast?

Try: sorrel, kale — tougher than old boots but good stir-fried, in soups with lots of onion, or stuffed and stewed — collards, ditto, they are really tough cabbage-like leaves, but good stir-fried.

There are a lot of good Chinese vegies, too, not just Chinese cabbage and bok choy but the thin-stemmed Chinese celery that adds flavour to just about anything, the parsley-like mitsuba and lots of lovely, fast-growing, greens like mizuna. Try Japanese turnips: lovely, crunchy, sweet, white things — eat them raw or steamed or baked; radish, of course, either long or short; fast-maturing red mignonette lettuces; carrots (mini or French Round carrots mature fastest).

As for crops to sow now for spring, try:

Peas (conventional, sugar and snap), broad beans, cauliflowers, masses of broccoli (can never have too much), kohlrabi, cabbages (particularly Savoy or some of the new smaller drumheads).



Scatter the seeds thickly and pick them no bigger than your little finger.

Other March jobs

- Plant like mad, if we get the good autumn rains I suspect are over the horizon. (One secret of a drought-hardy garden is getting your trees established while there's rain around).
- Move shrubs and small trees while the weather is cool, but still warm enough for them to put out new roots.
- Take rose and other shrub cuttings: snappable wood about as long

as your hand. Fill a box with clean sand and plant so just the top third is poking out. Keep moist and in semi-shade; plant out your new roses next winter. Or try root cuttings — a slab of root, hoiked out and planted in a pot. A warning though: if it's from a grafted tree (or grape or kiwi fruit vine, you'll just get the root stock.)

- Leave pumpkins in a sunny spot (such as the shed roof or on paving) for a few days to cure so their skins will harden before storing them (on their sides — moisture collects in the tops and bottoms and the pumpkin may rot).

And if it does rain, strip off and go paddling in the puddles.

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From Spade To Blade

Garden Recipes by Gary Thomas

What's the gardening chef been up to this time? Well ... let's just say he's been hard at work finding great ingredients and finding good ways to use them.



I love poaching in all its forms.

The hunt for a mushroom.

The sweetness of a stolen apple.

The thrill of fishing along a creek bank surrounded by paddocks and forest.

Eggs on a Sunday morning with nowhere to be and nothing to hurry me.

Of course, every cook is a poacher by definition, in that we freely steal each other's ideas and present them as our own!

As a food term, poaching is defined by the heat of the liquid. It should be around 90°Celsius. If you can see the water moving, this means it is too hot, and you are actually simmering the food. Poaching is a soft and gentle method of cooking, rather like those Sunday eggs themselves.

Pumpkin Pickle

I have made this pickle with malt vinegar, apple cider vinegar, red wine vinegar, plain white vinegar and rice vinegar. They all work well though my favourite is probably a combination of the apple and red wine. Whichever you use, taste the pickle before using and adjust the seasonings if required. There should be a nice balance between the sweet, sour and salty tastes, allowing the freshness of the mint to linger last on the palate.

A pumpkin, about two and a half kilos

1 cup hot water

1 cup fresh mint leaves

6 cloves garlic

1/2 cup vinegar

6 tablespoons sugar

3 tsp salt

1/2 cup olive oil

1. Preheat the oven to 170°C. Halve the pumpkin and use a large spoon to scrape out the seeds. Do it carefully so that the

inside flesh is smooth and enticing. Placing the flat side down, use a sharp knife to trim away the pumpkin skin. Quarter the piece for equal sizing then repeat for the other half.

2. Place the pumpkin pieces into an oven tray, lightly sprinkle with salt and pepper and pour over the hot water. Using either foil or a lid, cover tightly and place in the oven until just tender. Some varieties hold their shape better than others, but 25 to 40 minutes is the norm. Use a cake skewer to test. If overdone, place immediately in cold water to arrest the cooking process.

3. Make sure the mint is dry and clean of grit then blend it together with all the other ingredients. Adjust the seasonings if required.

4. Cut the pumpkin into nice big bite-sized pieces and toss gently in the pickling liquid to coat all sides. Eat immediately or store in the refrigerator for up to two weeks.

One delicious and elegant way to eat this pumpkin is to toss it with some hardy leaves such as genuine wild rocket and crumbly moist fetta. Toast a thick piece of good bread, cut it diagonally, place one at ninety degrees on top of the other and pile the salad on top. You can further enhance the protein by tossing the pumpkin with an equal amount of cooked chick peas.

Dinner for One

A simple and healthy dinner for one can be made using that trout we found earlier.

You'll need the fish, a tablespoon of olive oil, a good squeeze of lemon, 5 or 10 dried native pepper leaves (I use the leaf from a female *Tasmannia lanceolata*), any sized zucchini as long as it is freshly picked and the flower on it is good enough to eat, some salt.

Have you got a heavy frypan with a good lid? Put about a cup of water into it with the lemon juice and the leaves and place the pan over a hot flame. Put the fish and zucchini into the pan. Put on lid. Check after a minute that



the water is steaming. A little extra water may be required. Turn off the heat, make sure the lid is on tight, and leave to steam through maybe one minute more. Just how do you like your fish cooked? This will get you about medium. Plate the fish then spill a few drops of water onto the pan to pick up the caramelised juices. Discard the pepper leaves and pour the pan juices over the trout. Serve with a salad tossed in a balsamic vinegar dressing.

I was looking over an old menu board yesterday. There were eight items on the list; not one of them mentioned zucchini and every item had zucchini in it. They were:

- Ratatouille
- Pasta with five cheese sauce (and finely diced zucchini)
- Burger with onion, tomato and beetroot (and grilled zucchini slices)
- Mushroom pie (with grated zucchini)
- Crumbed veggie stack (including you know what)
- Zuppa Bianca (white beans, zucchini and Gruyere)
- Layered vegetable tart (just another layer)
- Potato frittata with olive paste (and thinly sliced zucchini)

So, when the kids say "Not zucchini again, please", think relative honesty and reply "No, mushroom pie."

Mushroom Pie

All the vegetables in this pie came from a friend's

place and the walk to and from there. He asked me to water his veggies while he was away and I had to harvest many of them so they didn't go to waste. It would have been disrespectful not to!

- 1 large onion
- 1 cup celery, sliced
- 3 cups mixed mushrooms, sliced
- 2 cups zucchini, grated
- 1 cup cucumber
- 14 sage leaves
- 2 tbsp rice flour
- 3 tbsp cream
- 1 blind baked pastry case.

1. Dice and softly fry the onion. Add the celery and gently sweat it. Add the mushrooms, stir through.
2. Add the grated zucchini and soften.
3. Purée the cucumber with the sage leaves and the chives. Whisk in the rice flour and cream.
4. Mix all together, pour into the pastry case and bake in a pre-heated moderate oven until slightly firm and springy to the touch.

It goes really well with a bit of homemade tomato sauce, chunky style. That reminds me, I haven't got many tomatoes in this year, but if anyone needs some watering done around harvest time...

Cheers, Gary Thomas

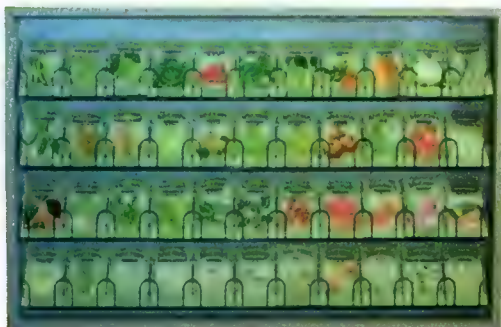
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MUD BRICK MAKING THROUGH THE EYES OF A CHILD

Making mud bricks is hard yakka you say? Well ... yes and no. But as Evelyn demonstrates, it's not that far removed from child's play, either.

by Evelyn Tracey and Andrew Cole

Ladysmith, New South Wales

MY PASSION is old English buildings, and, to fulfill a dream, I reconstructed the roof of my very ordinary shed and added a barn on the rear. The end result is a workshop that looks very much like a half-timbered English cottage.

The barn section is post and beam with mud brick infill and it was the construction of this that led to my friend's six-year-old daughter writing an essay for school titled 'How to make Mud Bricks'. Needless to say, the teacher was blown out of the water and I thought it deserves no less than this article.

Evelyn loves to get covered in mud up to the elbows and does a wonderful job of filling the joins and coating the constructed walls with a thick oozing slurry. I have included several photographs of her getting involved with the making of the bricks in the mould I made back in 1980. Anyway, here is her story exactly as she wrote it:

How to Make a Mud Brick

by Evelyn Tracey

What you need

A shovel, wheelbarrow, mud, water, cement mixer, brick shaper and bucket.

What you do

Dig a hole to collect clay. Put the clay into the mixer. Then turn it on.

While it's spinning, add water (with a bucket), add more clay if needed.

The mixture should be like dry playdough.

Tilt the mixer so that the clay pours into the wheelbarrow.

Shovel the clay into the brick mould (shaper). Bash the clay with the shovel until it is firm and flat.



1



2

1. Fill the mould with mud.
2. Ram the mud well into the mould.
3. Pack the mud down with a shovel.
4. Push the brick out of the mould. Get help if you need it.
5. Lay the brick on plastic to dry.

Press the lever so the big brick rises up and pops out.

Then carry the brick and put it down on the ground.

Leave the brick to dry for two weeks.

Continue making mud bricks to make as many as you need.



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Limited vegetable growing space needn't rule out growing the finest pumpkins. Not if you cultivate the Golden Nugget, argues Wendy.

by Wendy Bartlett

Nairne, South Australia

MOST PEOPLE dream of finding gold at the bottom of their garden and I'm no different to everybody else. Except that my dreams of finding gold are all about the quest to grow the largest and sweetest pumpkins, and when you have limited space, it's hard to go past the Golden Nugget for productivity and versatility.

Friends along my street complain to me about their rambling pumpkin vines which escape the confines of their vegie patch and invade neighboring garden beds.

"What's the problem?" I ask. "You live on half an acre on the outskirts of town. Do you know how envious city gardeners would be if they could see your vegie patch?"

They shrug their shoulders, still seemingly torn between chopping back the invading vine and losing a pumpkin or two or missing out on picking those few extra blooms from their favorite rose.

For the true organic vegie gardener there's nothing more important than growing as much food as you can in whatever space you have available. My six metre by six metre vegie patch may be considered small by some, but the key to obtaining maximum productivity per square metre is to have a highly fertile soil and to choose the correct plants. Unlike their rambling cousins, Golden Nugget pumpkins take up as much room as an average zucchini plant — about one square metre. The average size of the fruit is 12 to 15 cm and it can weigh 450 to 750 gm, but expect anything from the size of an orange to a deep rice bowl.

In the garden

During early spring I dig four holes in my vegie patch about one metre apart and place well-rotted horse or cow and chook manure and some compost, along with a handful of blood and bone and organic fertiliser pellets into each one. After mounding up the soil, straw, hay or lawn clippings are placed on top as mulch. I allow a couple of months for the organic material to be incorporated into the soil by worms and other soil life and during this time fast-growing crops like salad greens can be planted in the

spaces between the mounds. During late spring to early summer when the soil temperature has reached an average of 20°Celsius I plant three or four seeds into each mound, leaving the strongest seedling to grow to maturity.

I mulch up to a metre around each plant with pea straw and water deeply once a fortnight through a seeping hose buried just below the soil surface. In mid-summer I scrape aside the mulch, sprinkle a small handful of organic fertiliser pellets around the plant out to the drip zone and then place a five-centimetre layer of well-rotted poultry manure on top of this before replacing the mulch.

Pumpkins are heavy feeders, using large amounts of potassium and a deficiency will cause scorching and curling of leaves. Thorough preparation of the soil and feeding at the correct times during the season will prevent this. During early growth I feed plants with homemade liquid fertiliser made from herbs and weeds, but near the end of the season I ease off on the liquid fertiliser. According to organic gardener Peter Bennett, in his book *Organic Gardening*, "Late applications of nitrogen fertilisers will reduce their keeping quality". For this reason it is best to eat the late-season and store the mid-season fruits if a high-nitrogen fertiliser is being used.

It's important to water pumpkins early in the morning as they are prone to powdery mildew especially late in the season, although this is a natural process in the life cycle of the plant and unless the plant's productivity or health is affected there's no need to control it. For those who wish to keep it under control without the use of chemicals, add two teaspoons of baking soda and two tablespoons of olive oil to a one-litre spray bottle half-filled with water. Mix well then fill the rest of the bottle with water and spray daily until the mildew disappears.

Begin harvesting pumpkins as soon as their skin turns orange in early to mid-summer. If storing them leave them on the vine until the vine has withered in late autumn. I pile them into cane baskets and use them as table decorations during winter. It's possible to have pumpkins all year round depending on how many plants are planted. I plant one plant per family member and one for luck and this seems to produce enough to get us through the year.

In the kitchen

In the kitchen I find the thin skin of Golden Nugget pumpkins easier to handle than the thick skin of other members of their family. My mother suffers from scleroderma, an arthritic-type disease and she is always asking me for her monthly supply of pumpkins when she comes to visit. For her it's as simple as peeling off the skin with a vegetable peeler, and she doesn't even need to do this to the pumpkins harvested early in the season because the skin is soft enough to eat. The bright orange, sweet-flavoured flesh has a delicate nutty flavour.

Don't be tempted to scoop out the seeds and toss them into the compost bin or to the chooks. "The seeds of pumpkins contain much higher nutritional value than the flesh ... Mature pumpkin seeds, fried or lightly roasted in oil and salted with vegetable salt to taste, are delicious", says Peter Bennet.

The Golden Nugget pumpkin is an excellent choice when used in soups, mixed in with mashed potato, roasted in the oven and sprinkled with roasted slivered almonds and paprika or baked whole in the oven and then stuffed with vegetable risotto.

For those of you in my predicament where space is an issue it's hard to go past the Golden Nugget pumpkin for the sweetest and tastiest treat. There are so many ways to use them in the kitchen to satisfy even the fussiest eater. For a pleasant surprise why not go in search of gold at the bottom of your garden next summer.

Roasted Pumpkin Stuffed with Vegetable Risotto

4 average sized golden nugget pumpkins, whole

Risotto

- 25 g butter
- 1 onion, chopped finely
- 1 cup short grain rice
- 3 cups boiling chicken stock
- 4 cups finely chopped vegetables (mushrooms, zucchini, peas, beans, celery, spinach, corn, broccoli or cauliflower)
- 2 tbsp shredded parmesan or tasty cheese
- 2 tbsp chopped parsley



It's hard to go past the Golden Nugget for versatility and sweetness.

1. Chop 1/3 off the top of the whole pumpkins and dice finely after peeling skin then put aside. Place the remaining 2/3 of each pumpkin into a baking dish with a little water, then cover dish with foil and bake in moderate oven for 1 1/2 hours or until a skewer slides easily into pulp.
2. Chop onion, vegetables, parsley and grate cheese — put aside.
3. Add butter to a deep pan and fry for one minute before adding rice. Cook for another minute while stirring.
4. Add boiling stock, bring to the boil, then with lid on, simmer for ten minutes.
5. Add chopped vegetables and cook for further five minutes or until stock has been absorbed into rice and vegetables are cooked through.
6. Add cheese and parsley. Allow to cool.
7. When pumpkins are ready, scoop out a little of the soft flesh, add this to risotto mixture, then fill half scooped out pumpkins with risotto mixture.
8. Serve with warm crusty bread.

Serves 4.

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Living In Fowl Times

From Araucanas to Transylvanian Naked Necks, Alanna welcomes your queries about living with chooks. Write to Earth Garden, PO Box 2, Trentham, Vic, 3458 or email info@earthgarden.com.au.



by Alanna Moore
Castlemaine, Victoria

Dear Fowl Fanciers and Duck Dabblers,

There is a grim topic to be tackled this issue. Yes, it's the big C word. No, not chook cancer, but the ugly spectre of cannibalism in the flock. Usually rare in free-range flocks, but a possible vice that can develop with a bit of unbalanced diet and mismanagement.

More inspiring are tales of gentlemen roosters tending offspring and birds whose natural intelligence prompts them to seek out appropriate herbal medications or dietary supplements as required. (Humans also have this ability, but our civilised world curbs many of our natural behaviours.)

With autumn here, the flush of spring chickens, endless eggs and hot summer nights on the wane, your fowls will soon be enjoying a rest from egg-laying as they shed their feathers and grow a fresh new batch. This requires plenty of protein, and sometimes, if they don't get enough protein, a nasty problem may emerge ...

Curbing Cannibalism

Hi Alanna,

You have been recommended to me by a friend and she suggested I write to you as I desperately seek your opinion on the following.

My husband and I have eight pet chooks — seven Lohmanns (aged three years) and one big black elderly girl whom we adopted when her former owner moved into the city.

All eight live together in perfect harmony on our acreage property on Brisbane's southern outskirts. They share a secure fenced area of about 1,000 square metres, which has lush green grass, trees and shrubs, and at night they are enclosed in their little replica Queenslander cottages. Their diet consists of grains, green vegetables, pumpkin, rockmelon, garlic and molasses. We collect six eggs every day.

(Cate goes on to describe an episode of cannibalism, which I'll spare our vegetarian readers the grisly details of. — Alanna)

Can you please tell me why they were so cruel to her? Betty joined our Lohmanns almost two years ago so I can't work out why they would suddenly turn on her in such a way. Any information you have would be greatly appreciated. Kind regards, Cate Lane-Handley, Brisbane, Queensland.

Cate,

It's a cruel world. When you keep these hybrid 'factory' breeds of fowl their protein requirements are so high (to fuel their genetically-determined high egg output) that it's not surprising that they are also infamous for gruesomely picking and poking each other when undernourished, which it certainly sounds like they are. Their bodies tell them they need protein quick!

(Similarly, Kelli Taylor has written in about her Isa Browns and other hens: "Is it normal for chooks to descend like vultures on mince meat? Does this mean they are deficient in some nutrient?" — Alanna)

Hungry creatures can get a taste for cannibalised tucker, particularly picking on outsiders, like your Betty and birds that are feeling a bit ancient, crook or vulnerable and can't escape quick enough! It can become habit-forming too, and that's why it's recommended to cull any serial cannibals.

Best to avoid this situation by giving sufficient dietary protein, with formulated pellets and crumbles the easiest option. These mixes are designed to have the right proportions of carbohydrate, protein, vitamins and minerals for birds at different stages of life.

If you'd prefer a more natural high source of protein, compost worms and termites and other insects can be farmed, or wild harvested, as a great live feed additive.

You can breed worms in a proprietary worm farm box or DIY equivalent, converting your kitchen scraps into vermicompost in the process. Baby termites in any old wood heaps can be harvested and will be greatly appreciated by poultry. Aboriginal people used them as a great food source once too.

You could even prepare future vegetable garden beds by covering them with unwanted timber (not treated chemically) plus mulching materials to suppress weeds and keeping it all a bit moist underneath to attract termites. You can then run a chook tractor (a mobile pen, where birds provide intense cultivation of the soil) over the area, turning timbers over to reveal the tasty treats for your feathered rotary hoes. (Araucana fowl make excellent such rotary hoes, I've found.)

Another approach to this problem is to go for some nice old heritage breeds of fowl that don't lay so frenetically, keeping only one breed at a time to ensure better flock harmony.

Speaking of cannibalism, I was interested to discover humans are not much different to chooks in this regard. And it wasn't just the wicked witch in Hansel and Gretel. Think streets of London in the 1300s (as described at the

Museum of London, where I visited recently). During a period of climate change, when it rained so much for seven years that crops were failing everywhere, people took to snatching children off the city streets and eating them in order to survive.

So don't be too harsh on your chooks. Humans will always be on top of the immoral high ground, having perfected the arts of mass destruction and genocide, of people and environments.

Broody Campine

Dear Alanna,

I have a broody gold Campine bantam hen. She has been sitting on eight eggs (not all her own) for approximately one week. I have isolated her from the other hens and she has plenty of food, water and shelter, although she has not touched any food. She is an excellent mother and I have never seen her off the eggs in this time. My question is — am I doing the right thing? I have heard it takes three weeks for the eggs to hatch. Is there any way I can make her more comfortable? Any advice is greatly appreciated. Thanking you, Rebecca Hale, Awaba, NSW.

Rebecca,

Congratulations — you have a breed of fowl classified as non-broody sitting on eggs! The Campine was bred to be active at foraging, flighty and a reasonably good egg layer; mainly a fast liver and good looker. So the eggs may hatch at around 21 days, but she may not be there to see it. Have you got a spare egg incubator or broody (other breed of hen) handy?

And make sure she can access that food and water without having to move from the nest. Keep it close beside her.

If you do end up with some Campine chicks, they feather up very quickly and the high dietary protein requirement for this has led them to having a reputation for feather picking and cannibalism. Some crushed sunflower seeds or boiled linseed added to feed will help prevent this. Good luck!

Twins from one egg?

Hi Alanna,

I have a very happy bunch of hens who free-range



The fowl yard can be an ecosystem in which plants perform many functions and provide produce to share with fowl.

my orchards and paddocks during the day. I like the bigger breeds with their fluffy knickerbockers bustling as they go about their busy way, and find their size is a deterrent to ranging hawks and falcons. I have to watch the chickens though, but my rooster Sooty is very good at keeping one eye on the sky and yelling a warning to the girls if a predator is about.

So, now that I have set the scene, here is my question. I set my own eggs, and of those that I eat occasionally I notice that sometimes I get a double-yolker. What would happen if a hen sat on a double-yolk egg? Is it possible for twins to hatch from one egg?

Thanks Alanna. Kathy, Tea Tree, Tasmania.

Kathy,

I suspect that those double-yolkers would be duds to try to hatch from. Far better to set two if you want two chicks (they'll have the right amount of albumen to feed from and space to develop in their own egg).

When setting eggs only choose normal sized ones, free from defects and ideally as clean and fresh as possible. The first 20 to 30 eggs laid after a hen's first moult will be the very best to select, if you want healthy, robust chicks.

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Rooster in the henhouse

Hi Alanna,

After sadly losing my three hens to an unknown disease, this year I decided to start again and acquired six baby chicks, apparently Bantam/Silky crossed. They came in a variety of beautiful colours, began to lay almost one egg a day each, and one turned out to be a rooster.

Living in a township, I had never considered having a rooster before, but decided to live-and-let-live, reading what I could about managing his crow. I decided that the easiest thing was to take him off his perch at night and cloister him in a pet carrier in the garage until I tend to them in the morning. This works really well, and he is quite happy for me to give him a pat and a goodnight chat after sunset (most often at around 10 pm!). This keeps the neighbours happily asleep in their beds without conflict, which I believe is important living so close to the next house. My rooster still somehow manages to crow in his little box, but it sounds so far away, and in the morning he gets a chance to reassert his domain, and do his little dance of leadership with his flock.

Having never had a rooster before I was surprised to notice my flock of chickens behaving completely differently than I had ever seen. I began to notice very distinct calls and warbles between them, which was particularly amplified when they hatched baby chicks. The rooster even chats to me, no doubt perceiving me as part of the hierarchy. The rooster has very much surprised me by the way he manages his flock, which brings me to my question. Are roosters naturally maternal, or is it actually chicken paternal instinct I am witnessing?

Here are some examples: when they free-range in the yard, he searches out and builds nesting areas for the hens, often sitting for more than an hour while he rearranges things and settles in as if he is going to lay, all the time calling to his hens, who eagerly await his departure, crossing their legs no doubt to hold it in 'til he says it's ready. He also shepherds baby chicks, breaking up food for them, calling them to the food, and holding them under his wings whilst perched on the roost at night. He manages to keep himself between one pullet and two bully hens, putting them in their place when they cross the line.

I must add that now having had a rooster, I would never keep a flock without one. At feeding time, I find myself mesmerised by their intimate family life, and a charm that I had never before seen. So if anyone has ever considered the possibility of keeping a rooster, don't be put off by its crow. One can easily find a way, and your hens will forever be a happier bunch.

Tania Rose.

PS: I also found a way to deal with broody hens. I allowed them to keep one egg to hatch (I drew a smiley face on the egg with permanent marker, so I knew which egg to leave), and collected the others to eat. Then, when they are grown, I find a home for the chick, or keep it myself. The little lass has been through her breeding process, and carries on as per usual, happy and healthy with abundant eggs to share once more.



A flock of chickens may behave quite differently when there's a rooster about the place.

Tania,

A sweet letter, thanks Tania. The Chinese have long recognised the noble and courageous character of the chook, one of their twelve revered animals. (I am a fire rooster myself.)

Roosters, in my experience also, are typically gentle and doting parents. They share an enthusiastic joy for life with their hens and will defend offspring to the death. Their general docility could be partly explained by the development of domestication. Across millennia, aggressive behaviour has been bred out from the wild *Gallus* family of fowl. A mean, nasty rooster should always end up in the pot or the compost pile.

Poultry and permaculture

Dear Alanna,

I am currently building several yards around a gorgeous little cottage to house some chooks. I live in the southern highlands of New South Wales. My query is: can you recommend some trees and plants that I can grow in these yards? Our summers are hot and winters quite cold so I was thinking maybe something deciduous (protected from the chickens of course); but was also wondering if there was such a plant that would be beneficial?

Thank you for your time - it is much appreciated.

Kind regards, Lisa, Hilltop, NSW.

Lisa,

Well, the design stage is a good time to discover and implement the principles of permaculture in your fowlyard. You'll then learn to see the fowlyard as a potential ecosystem whereby the layout and plants selected perform many functions and provide much produce to share with fowl. An investment in high biodiversity plantings allows for self-

feeding and self-medicating by foraging fowl, while reducing outside inputs required.

So I can see your fowlyard doubling up as an orchard of deciduous fruit trees — there's a huge variety to choose from. For luxury summer shading I can see pergolas and fences covered with lush green vines dripping with grapes. Fruit trees could be interspersed with multi-purpose trees such as Tagasaste and Black Wattle (*Acacia melanoxylon*). Their summer seeds will no doubt be very popular and packed with protein to boot. The Black Wattle is unusual amongst its kin in the *Acacia* family, having evolved in rainforest country where it became tolerant of highly fertile soils and lives a long life, producing fabulous timber in some cases. So it is also useful in fowlyards where manure build-up is a problem. It does like a bit of moisture, so planting by a duck pond would be perfect.

For fresh green pick underfoot one could choose from many delicious groundcover plants, ranging from perennial comfrey to annual grasses and leafy vegetables. To sow a variety of green pick plants you can broadcast seed from a proprietary bird seed mix over a corner of the fowl yard, then deny birds access for a few weeks or cover it over with mesh through which birds can peck at the tasty emerging tips.

If a pond is installed in the centre of a fowl yard orchard, the water can act as a heat bank, raising temperatures at night in winter, thus improving the micro-climate and helping protect any cold-tender trees.

So take a look at some of the excellent publications on permaculture design, which will help you with species lists and the like*. If you live too far from nurseries, you can always mail order your deciduous fruit trees — they will be sent bare-rooted in the winter.

*Check out www.permacultureinternational.org

Self-worming chooks

Dear Alanna,

I just read your reply to somebody about getting rid of worms in chooks. We grow wormwood bushes in our chook yards. The chooks love to eat it and we learnt that it is an effective wormer. They can control their own dosage and if they happen to get worms, can sort it out by themselves!

Take care, Clare, Albany, WA.

Clare,

So you have taken that excellent permaculture approach — grow a useful plant where's it's needed and save energy. The natural ability to self-medicate as required is innate in all beings, it appears. And there are better things to get on with in your life than worming chooks, no?

Southernwood is another useful plant with pest repellent properties that can be grown in situ. And many other herbal tonic and remedy plants can grow in the fowlyard, fostering biodiversity in the chooks' diet and a healthier garden all round. Happy chooking to all of you!

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Flour for Bread Making

When she first ventured out to buy flour for making her own yeasted bread, Liz was flummoxed by all the choices. It would have been so much easier if there had been a simple guide to different flours. Here it is!



It tastes good — nutty with no bitterness — and it performs consistently. An ear of wheat has all the ingredients for a good loaf.

by Liz Garson

Palmwoods, Queensland

STONEGROUND, wholemeal, wholewheat, wheatmeal, 100%, 80%, brown, white, granary, unbleached, rye, spelt. What on earth does it all mean?

The most useful advice is to read flour packaging and be aware of what it does not tell you. Unless it says that it is organic, or stoneground, or wholemeal, it isn't.

Secondly, buy flour that is as fresh as possible. Shop-bought flours have a sell-by date; find the date furthest ahead. If you are buying from a specialist outlet, they should be able to tell you when and where the flour was ground. Health food shops are the best sources of fresh organic flour.

Bread mixes contain flour, yeast and salt and can also include preservatives, sugar, raising agents, additional gluten and colouring. If you want to make real bread, avoid bread mixes.

Wheat

Flour is made from wheat unless the packaging says otherwise. It is the most effective grain for making bread. It tastes good — nutty with no bitterness — and it performs consistently. An ear of wheat has all the ingredients for a good loaf: starch to feed the yeast and to turn golden brown during baking; germ to give essential fats and oils which enhance the nutritional value of bread; bran to aid digestion; and gluten which enables dough to rise.

Strong flour (sometimes called Hard flour)

The strength of flour relates to the amount of gluten present. The more gluten there is, the more even the rise of the dough and the lighter the bread. Wheat grown quickly in hot and dry conditions has a high gluten content.

If you're making cakes and biscuits, flour which is not labelled strong gives better results.

Stoneground 100 per cent wholemeal or wholewheat flour

As the name suggests, this flour is ground in a traditional millstone using the whole grain of wheat; nothing removed, nothing added. In my opinion it is the best flour for making a full-flavoured loaf. When wholemeal flour is stoneground, it will say so on the packaging. If not, chances are that the flour has been roller-milled, bleached and then bran and wheat germ returned and colour added (caramel or molasses).

There is no difference between wholemeal and wholewheat flour, unless the packing on wholemeal flour tells you that rye and/or barley have been added.

Wholemeal bread is a meal in itself; delicious served warm with butter and a glass of red wine!

80 and 90 per cent extraction flours

Between 10 and 20 per cent of the bran (the outside layer of the wheat) is sieved off to leave a finer, paler and lighter flour than 100 per cent wholemeal. Provided it is labelled stoneground it is natural flour with only bran removed; it will not have been bleached or reconstituted in any way. This type of flour is sometimes called 'stoneground wheatmeal' and produces a lighter and finer-flavoured loaf than 100 per cent. It's great served warm with a dollop of marmalade for breakfast.

Strong white flour

The best strong white flour is stoneground wheat which is sieved to remove most of the bran and the germ. Unless the packaging tells you that it is unbleached, the flour will have gone through a bleaching process.

It makes a light and creamy bread which is delicious eaten very fresh, and is a great accompaniment to soup on a cold winter's day.

Granary-type flour

This is a combination of 80 per cent extraction flour and malted wheat or barley flour. Malted grain is allowed to start to germinate before stonegrinding, thus releasing some of the sugars locked into the grain. This results in a popular sweeter bread. It is delicious with homemade jam or honey.

Once again, beware of additives. Unless the packaging says that it is stoneground wheatmeal with added malted grain, it is almost certainly roller-milled flour with malt extract, malted grains, bran, molasses and caramel added.

Brown flour

This is not normally suitable for bread making unless it is strong brown flour. Even then, it is normally white roller-milled flour with caramel added.

Other flours

There are many other flours that can be used to make yeasted bread. For people with gluten intolerance, flours such as barley, rye and oats are an alternative to wheat, although the resulting bread tends to be heavier and doughier.

1. Barley flour This makes a sweeter loaf than wheat flour. Barley grows well in cool and wet conditions, hence its traditional use in Northern Europe. Try mixing it 50:50 with wheat flour for a full-flavoured, dense loaf, excellent

served thinly sliced with cold meats and cheese.

2. Rye flour Rye also grows in cool, wet climates and was one of the staple grains in Britain in the Middle Ages. It is mixed with wheat flour to produce 'maslin' which produces a bread full of sweet nuttiness.

3. Spelt Flour This is a low-yielding, ancient grain that almost died out in the 19th Century when more commercially-viable grains were grown intensively. Fortunately, it survived and is available in specialist outlets today. It is a fine flour, which rises easily and evenly, producing a delicious loaf not dissimilar from maslin bread.

4. And the rest... Oats have largely disappeared from modern bread making. For gluten intolerance, oats are an alternative, but are mostly used for unleavened bread such as bannocks, because the lack of gluten reduces the rise of the dough.

Maize or cornmeal can be used to make Broa, a Portuguese yeasted bread, although it is usually used to make non-yeast breads originating from the Americas, such as cornbread which relies upon egg as a raising agent.

To make tasty bread with as much of the original natural grain as possible, the trick is to read the packaging and to buy flour that is as fresh as possible. Unless it tells you that you are buying what you want, you are not.

And of course, having your own wheat paddock and millstone is the best option of all!

Desperate Mum Finds The Solution To Washing Without Nasty Chemicals - Aids Breast Cancer Research Too!

DARKAN WA - If you are concerned about the environment, if you're worried about the chemicals around your house... but you still expect to have a clean, and fresher smelling wash, then **Miracle Wash Laundry Balls** are your answer. Please let me explain.

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Uncommon Fruits & Vegies



THE PERFECT PEAR

With strains originating in Europe and Asia, the pear is a versatile cool climate fruit that will grow in places where other fruit struggles. *Earth Garden* founder Keith Smith discusses the fruits of his search for the best.

by Keith Smith

Artarmon, New South Wales

A PEAR variety called 'Burree' was included by the London nurserymen George London and Henry Wise in *The Complete Gard'ner*, published in 1704. 'It's call'd the *Butter Pear*, because of its smooth, delicious, melting soft *Pulp*,' they wrote. Their book was an abridged translation of a treatise published in Paris in 1658 by Jean-Baptiste de la Quintinye, who laid out the orchard and kitchen garden at Versailles for the French King Louis XIV.

This kind of European pear (*Pyrus communis*) was chosen by the dedicated Belgian pomologists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, who selected and planted hundreds of seeds and grafted as many seedlings onto quince stock to obtain the soft, sweet, buttery or melting dessert pears we know today.

Nicholas Herdenport of Mons (Bergen) first bred the juicy Belgian pears still classified as *Beurré* (butter). They were further developed by Doctor Jean Baptiste van Mons (1765–1842), a scientist at the University of Louvain, who devoted his life to perfecting pears, notably 'Beurre Bosc', one of the finest European pears.

Another kind of pear had evolved over centuries of cultivation in Asia, particularly in China and Japan, which yielded distinctive juicy, yet crisp and crunchy fruit, rather like an apple. They descend from the wild Asian pear (*Pyrus pyramidalis*).

Choosing the perfect pear is a personal decision. My favourite at the moment is the Australian 'Corella'. They are beautiful. They have all the virtues of an Asian pear and, if you leave them for a few days, all the attributes of a European pear.

Special varieties of pear were introduced to Britain from Normandy in France during the Middle Ages for perry, a drink made by crushing pears and fermenting the juice, which contained more alcohol and malic acid than apple cider.



One of the finest European pears, the Bosc variety was developed in Belgium.

'I must have saffron, to colour the Wardon pies,' says the Clown in Act IV of William Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. This pear variety, mentioned in the twelfth century by the English abbot Alexander Neckham, originated at the Cistercian monastery of Wardon Abbey, near Bedford. Fruit were included in the equally-famous Wardon (or Warden) pies, or served, as at Henry IV's wedding feast, in 'Peris in Syrippe'.

The British East India Company established fruit and vegetable gardens at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652 to supply ships with fresh produce. At their last port of call on the voyage from Plymouth, ships of the First Fleet anchored in Cable Bay, the port of Cape Town, to stock up on fruit trees. They loaded 'orange, Lime, Lemon, Quince Apple, Pear trees, in a Word, every vegetable production that the Cape afforded. Thus equipped, each ship like another Noah's Ark, away we steered for *Botany Bay*,' wrote George Worgan, surgeon of the flagship HMS *Sirius*.

Not long after coming ashore in January 1788, convicts were set to work to prepare a plot of ground on the eastern side of Sydney Cove (today's Circular Quay), close to the portable canvas house of Governor Arthur Phillip. This was Australia's first fruit orchard. 'We soon had the satisfaction of seeing the grape, the fig, the orange, the pear, and the apple, the delicious fruits of the Old, taking root and establishing themselves in our New World,' wrote Judge Advocate David Collins.

Pears are delicious. They contain no cholesterol, very little fat, plenty of fibre (most in the skin) and some vitamin C. Eat them poached (with cinnamon), as pear compote, baked, roasted, or served in the classic dish, pears in red wine.

Growing

Pears are deciduous and thrive best in a cool to mild temperate climate, with frosts to break their winter dormancy in spring. However, they will stand more summer heat than apples. Choose a sheltered spot, protected from cold winds.

Due to their plunging roots, pear trees need deep, rich, heavy loam soil. Prepare the soil with a top-dressing of well-rotted manure away from the trunk. They don't tolerate wet feet, but require regular watering. Providing sufficient moisture could be a problem in these times of global warming.

Some pear varieties are sterile, so you must grow two kinds to ensure pollination, which might take up a lot of space in a small garden. Standard sized trees have to be planted about 7.5 metres apart. Save space by growing dwarf trees, by training them on a wall or trellis as a cordon or espalier, or by growing trees with two or more varieties grafted on the same stock.

Don't allow pears to ripen on the tree, because they will fall off, to ripen on the ground. If the fruit comes off the stem with a light upward twist of the hand it is ready to be picked. Store at room temperature to ripen in ten days to two weeks (pears ripen from the inside outwards). Pick often — they will not ripen all at once. The slightest bruise will injure the skin.

The evenly-grained pinkish-brown timber of old pear wood is highly prized by furniture and musical instrument makers.

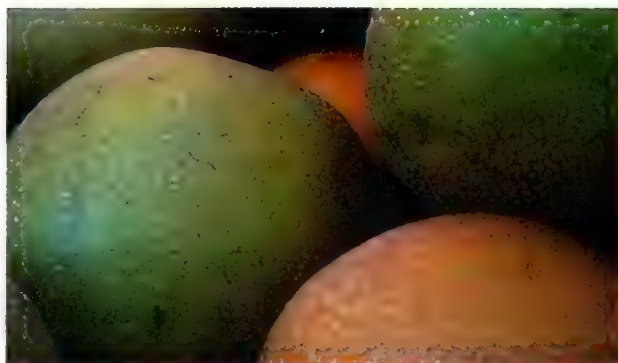
Some European pear varieties

There are hundreds of varieties of pears — this is a very small selection.

'Beurre Bosc' ('Kaiser Alexander'). The original Belgian brown pear, medium-large, with a tapering neck and bronze skin. Firm, buttery yellow-white flesh. Good for baking.

'Corella' ('Crimson Corella'). An Australian variety, named for the colourful birds (*Kakatoë sanguineus* — 'blood-stained cockatoos') and developed by German settlers in the Barossa Valley, South Australia. Small-to medium-sized fruit have golden skin, streaked with bright red. They are sweet, fragrant and have small seeds. Thought to have been a seedling of 'Forelle', which originated in Germany in the 1770s.

'Packham's Triumph' ('Packham'). This dessert pear was raised and developed by Charles Packham of Garra, near Molong, New South Wales in 1889. It is thought to



Nashi pears were first cultivated in Australia after the gold rushes of the 1850s.

be a seedling from 'Uvedale's St Germain' crossed with 'Williams'. Large, thin, yellow-skinned fruit is hardy, juicy and buttery. They are tip bearers, so cannot be artificially shaped and benefit from drastic thinning of fruit.

'Williams' ('Williams Bon Chrétien', 'Bartlett'). Originated in the eighteenth century in Berkshire, England in the orchard of Mr John Stair. Known as 'Bartlett' in the United States and 'Duchess' in South Australia. Medium-sized fruit with yellow skin, dotted and streaked red. Buttery flesh has a musky flavour. 'Beurre Bosc' is a good pollinator.

'Windsor'. A favourite pear in the first orchards at Kissing Point (Ryde), on the Parramatta River in Sydney. Bell-shaped large fruit ripen early in summer. Skin is green-yellow with an orange blush. Flesh is white, tender and sweet.

Asian pears

'Nashi'. Presumably brought to Australia in the 1850s by Chinese gold diggers from Canton. Smooth, round fruit are crisp and juicy, like an apple. Pick from the tree when ripe.

'Hosui'. Large bronze-skinned fruit are sweet and juicy.

'Nijisseki' ('Twentieth Century'). Said to be the best-flavoured Asian pear, originated in Japan about 1900. Fruit are round, yellow-skinned, but bruise easily.

'Shinseiki'. Round, yellow-skinned firm fruit ripen in late summer. No pollinating tree is needed.

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Recycling: Understanding the Materials Cycle

A Practical Guide to Reducing, Reusing and Recycling

— PART THREE OF A THREE PART SERIES —

Recycling is breaking down objects into raw material that can be re-formed. It's different to reusing, and isn't always straightforward. It pays to think ahead a little, Jill says.

by Jill Redwood

Goongerah, Victoria

WE'RE told that separating the glass from plastic and paper waste is recycling. But there's more to recycling than placing your out-of-date Christmas cards in a Planet Ark box and feeling sustainable.

Recycling is the last of the three Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle). *Reduce* is the most useful, because the energy needed to make, package, transport and store some non-essential item is saved entirely. Reusing means that a worthwhile object gets maximum use, which minimises energy use, pollution and waste. Recycling should not be confused with re-using. Recycling means breaking down or melting an object after it's not needed any more, so it can be re-formed into another object. It usually requires energy and water, and produces waste. It's a step up from dumping rubbish, but recycling unwanted 'stuff' is the least useful way to lighten our footprint on the planet. It should be the last option for something we can't reuse any more.

We should be suspicious of the corporate enthusiasm for recycling, and their jargon of products being 'recyclable'. Often those three little arrows on a piece of disposable single-use rubbish just counters any guilt people might feel about buying it. How many people realise the energy it takes to produce an aluminium can or bottle? From the mining and transport to the electricity to process and produce and even to melt it down afterwards. The energy and greenhouse gases it takes is phenomenal. Did you know that to make just one aluminium can uses the energy to power a TV set for three hours or a light all night? So buying carbonated, flavoured and coloured, sugar-rich liquid in an energy-intensive, disposable receptacle with three chasing arrows on it isn't quite the best thing anyone can do for the Earth, even if it gets recycled. Reading *Earth Garden* or chaining yourself to a bulldozer is much more fun and planet friendly. The same reasoning goes for buying a newspaper the size of a mattress every day, having a quick read, then throwing it in the 'recycling' pile.

Not that I'm against recycling — it's a big step up

from dumping in a tip, and like all Earth friendly activities, it pays to think ahead a little.

For useful items, the op shop or tip shop is the best recycling joint around. That's because it's really a 're-use' option, except that someone else does the re-using.

For the less useful things or those items that another 20 million people have a glut of (like bottles and newspapers), we mostly have to rely on the council's recycling boxes and bins. Your local council's environment officer should also advise you on how and where to recycle other things such as dead cars, polystyrene, computers, batteries, mobile phones, car oil, and a great selection of everyday throwaways. If not, call or visit a credible recycling business or website. Many regional areas are still not able to deal with less common items just because economy of scale doesn't make it worthwhile. So the fact that something *can* be recycled is often a far cry from actually *being* recycled.

Even in the big towns though, you can put as much paper as you want in the 'recycle' pile. But don't kid yourself that it's being re-made into more paper in Australia. In Australia, this ends up as cardboard and packaging or being sent overseas by the ship load for other countries to recycle. Our forests are still too cheap for Paperlinx (who make Reflex copy paper) to think about recycling used paper into new copy paper again. Newsprint is often too low in quality to be remade into anything but cardboard boxes or egg cartons.

Things like grass clippings and food scraps are easy to recycle at home, but what do we do about scrap metal, batteries, oil or plastics?

Glass

Sadly, glass bottles and jars are not made to be re-used commercially, despite being the perfect item for a born-again life. I remember the horse and cart that used to deliver the milk in washed pint (and later 600 ml) bottles. They could be refilled maybe 100 times. Our overflowing landfill sites now are with the compliments of the government and their mates the packaging industry, which wants to keep selling more and more throwaway wrapping and containers.



There are no paper companies that recycle either Tetra Packs or normal cartons. The company which did recycle milk cartons now imports cheap pulp from overseas, most likely from Indonesian rainforests.

The only way to recycle glass now is to put it in the glass recycling bin. But it takes a lot of energy to melt it down and reprocess it again, compared to a fraction of that to simply clean, sterilise and refill.

Wouldn't it be special to have clip-clop Clydesdales delivering milk, leaving good garden fertiliser every other street, and having a milko to run from house to house delivering milk in reused glass bottles again? How eco-friendly would that be?

Computers

Out of date computer equipment (e-waste) contains toxins like lead, mercury, cadmium and arsenic and even precious metals like gold and platinum. They have metal circuitry, mixed plastics, fire retardants and glass. Because computers are a huge growth industry with new and faster versions every month, upgrades create a huge waste problem. There's no national e-waste recycling scheme, but you can check out computer recycling in the phone book or web

for where you can dispose of these things properly. There are companies that either recycle, refurbish or reuse computers in every state. Televisions, mobile phones, printers and printer cartridges can also be recycled to some degree.

Batteries

Household batteries are commonly thrown in the bin. They come in sizes AAA, AA, C and D, can be rectangular and button shaped. Laptop computers, mobile phones, cordless phones, power drills, torches, toys, watches/clocks, cameras, smoke alarms and other items all use batteries. Recycling these zinc and manganese alkaline capsules is considered too expensive to be viable. This is a classic example of where the price of responsible disposal needs to be costed into the product's sale price. Any collected batteries are usually set in concrete and then dumped in landfill.

Using rechargeable batteries is the eco-friendly option. Each one can be recharged up to 1000 times.

Nana Technology

Now's the time to send in to *Earth Garden* descriptions of the things your grandma and grandpa used to do to be frugal and thrifty — to reuse and recycle. Jill's Mar was telling her the other day what her Gran and Pop did to make ends meet in Depression times. Value systems were very different then — we really do live in extravagant times. Kids shouldn't go to school in shoes that don't fit, or shiver their way through winter (like Jill's Mum did), but why not darn socks and mend boots? As petrol prices and interest rates go higher, now's the perfect time to share that frugal living tip with other Earth Gardeners. Please post or email your tip to: 'Frugal Living Tip', *Earth Garden*, PO Box 2 Trentham, Vic. 3458, or email it to: editorial@earthgarden.com.au.

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Milk containers over time: the more recent the less recyclable.

Cars

Each year in Australia, a staggering half a million cars come to end of their life. The car parts can be resold in wreckers' yards, while other materials can be shredded and recycled and the remaining metal eventually crushed and reused.

Plastics

The code number from 1 to 7 in the triangular arrows on the bottom of a plastic container doesn't mean that a container can be recycled, it just shows what type of plastic it's made of. Find out what plastics can be recycled in your area before you make the purchase then avoid the types that can't be. PET plastics are code no. 1 and HDPE (high density polyethylene) is code 2, while code 3 is vinyl. These plastics can't be recycled together so have to be separated.

PET bottles are indestructible. A friend and I used large two-litre screwtop PET bottles to store clothes and food in while kayaking down the rocky chutes and rapids of the Snowy River. They were jammed in the front of the inflatables and so took many hard knocks but stood up remarkably well. When this plastic is recycled, it's either reused here to make more bottles or exported to be reborn



and sold back to us as ecofleece hiking gear or in carpets and other synthetic fibres.

Industrial amounts of plastic waste are recycled back into garbage bags (to throw away more waste products!), bollards, playground equipment and car battery cases, water tanks, worm farms and compost bins, railway sleepers, chemical spill trays, vine poles and garden furniture. While these are great ways to recycle waste into longer life items, it doesn't justify buying plastic throwaways. Only a small percentage of plastics are recycled. Large cities can process clean plastic waste but not regional areas.

Polystyrene has limited end-use markets and economies of scale, which makes recycling it not very economical. When it is though, it can be granulated and mixed into new insulation board and boxes, mixed in with plaster or concrete to make a lightweight building material or in with soil and compost for aeration.

In 2003–04 approximately 10,000 tonnes of polystyrene packaging was made in Australia. Almost all of this was dumped.

Aluminium

Years ago I used to collect scrap metal from the local tips and cash in a trailer load at a scrapyard in the city. Aluminium was a great item — saucepans, old lawnmower and engine casings, screen door frames — you name it. Tonnes more was buried in the tips and never recycled. Aluminium is one of the most energy-intensive materials around and to throw it away after one short drink seems criminal. Furnaces used to melt it in recycling also use a lot of energy but about one-twentieth of that used to make a drink can from raw materials. Like I suggested in the previous articles, brewing your own or taking your own drink bottle out with you is the most planet-sustaining way to quench your thirst.

Car oil

Each year, more than 500 million litres of engine oil is sold in Australia!

It takes only one litre of oil to contaminate one million litres of water and a single oil change leaves us with four to five litres of dirty oil. It's also a finite resource so we should recycle it where we can. Used engine oil can be carefully filtered and recycled back into your motor. It can also be reused around the farm (chainsaw bar lubricant, painted on paling sheds, wooden gates and fences to darken and help preserve). Used oil can be poured back into containers and taken to a local garage or depot for recycling. It's then cleaned, refined and resold as motor oil.

It's very difficult to live in a developed country and not help create all this obscene waste. So the best we can do is reduce what we consume, reuse whatever we can and recycle what we can't avoid.



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WILDLIFE In My Life

HOMING WOMBATS

Wildlife refuge carer Georgina Beach sings an ode to some furry marsupial friends of hers.

by **Georgina Beach**

Taggerty, Victoria

My front lawn is teeming
With Wombats, all screaming
I cannot get out of the door!
The fences grow higher
As Wombats aspire
To sleep on my living room floor!

Now there's Mushroom, who's small
And she likes to play ball
But her personal habits need work.
And Tabitha nearly
Looks sweet at times, really,
But who knows when she'll go berserk.

Then Pumpkin is trouble,
She turns walls to rubble
And packs a bite truly renowned.
She loves to canoodle
With her sweetheart, Noodle,
The best-looking Wombat in town.

His face may be skewed
And his smile somewhat lewd
But he has a charm no-one can match!
With ears fluffy white
And his platinum coat bright
He's everyone's dream of a catch.

And next there is Digger,
With whom any trigger
May bring about banshee-like screams.
It's clear that he's trying
So hard to say something
But, no-one knows quite what he means.

Ariadne has poise,
She disapproves of noise
And maintains her virtue with pride.
Then last we have Mary,
Mammoth-sized and scary.
If you see her first, mate, I'd hide!



Every year thousands of native animals are injured or orphaned as a result of car accidents, dog or cat attacks, tree felling, hunting or pure bad luck.

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Looking After the Bush

the Big Picture and the Small Detail

Lincoln Kern is a long time *Earth Garden* reader, ecologist and activist and makes a living managing and restoring native vegetation and habitats through his business, www.practicalecology.com.au. He has also long participated in campaigns to protect native habitat and tries to protect our indigenous environment wherever possible. In this series of articles Lincoln describes practical ways for EG readers to manage native habitats.

by Lincoln Kern

Preston, Victoria

LIVING lightly on the planet is all-important so that we have room for nature. And *Earth Garden* has always helped people do that. I really enjoyed Barry Traill's contributions on managing indigenous flora and fauna because it was an issue that didn't get much coverage and too often land management approaches that are good for food production are not good for looking after the bush.

I want to help *Earth Garden* readers look after our environment by presenting practical approaches to protecting and managing native habitats while creating our productive living zones within them. Many *Earth Garden* readers live on rural land and are stewards of native habitats but we see little about how to look after that bush and ensure that our actions help improve that bush as the 'wilderness zone' in permaculture thinking. The bush in the back paddock can't be left without some management because there are always weeds and rabbits; and what are often considered low-impact practices, such as the collection of dead wood for firewood, degrade habitats.

I will also consider issues that can help people get some resources from the bush while still maintaining its values. Sometimes it is appropriate to have 'domesticated natural ecosystems'. Obtaining wood for firewood and building while maintaining or improving habitat is possible but it isn't done by clearfelling and heavy equipment. Other enterprises, such as collecting or growing bush tucker, beekeeping or small-scale logging or seed collection, can be compatible with nature conservation, but only through good planning and a light touch. So this is an introduction to integrated land management.

What's at stake

Australia is the only developed nation that has 'megadiversity'. We have a unique and rich continent to live on and it has a great abundance of completely unique plant and animal, that is, endemic, species. And we are rich enough to afford to look after it despite the fact our collective riches are partially based on digging it up, ploughing it up and selling it overseas. For example, Victoria has 4000 indigenous plant species yet is similar in size to Great Britain which has

only 800. Australia has origins in Gondwana and has been a stable continent for 60 million years and this has created this amazing and different place we need to protect.

The opportunities

Living with some self-sufficiency gives us the opportunity to leave room for other creatures and have wild spaces for our own spiritual wellbeing. National parks and conservation reserves are the way we do this in our larger society. However, many of us can create the space to do this in our own lives and our own block.

The contribution to nature conservation that private land in Australia can make is very important. Settlement has been selective in Australia and particular ecosystems, such as grasslands, grassy woodlands, riparian habitats and freshwater rivers and rainforests, were more desired for agriculture and have been cleared selectively. Many rare ecosystems occur predominantly on private land while many of the forests that are the subject of campaigns by environmental groups are vegetation types that are still common on public land. Many of the bush blocks that *Earth Garden* readers will be searching for to escape the city have these rare ecosystems that support flora and fauna because they are also marginal farming country as well. There is room for living on this kind of land but it takes care and knowledge to ensure that a self-sufficient lifestyle is compatible with native habitats.

There is a great opportunity for Earth Gardeners to lead the quiet life they desire and make a significant contribution to nature conservation. I certainly do not have space for details here, but there are many places to learn about this issue. Start with these organisations:

Trust for Nature Victoria: www.tfn.org.au

The Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage: www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity (Have a look at the threatened ecosystems section to understand the vegetation types that are rare.)

Bush Heritage Fund: www.bushheritage.asn.au

Zoning and management principles

Zoning is the basis for all coherent and efficient land management. The key is to look at the current conditions on a site and determine the best opportunities and limita-



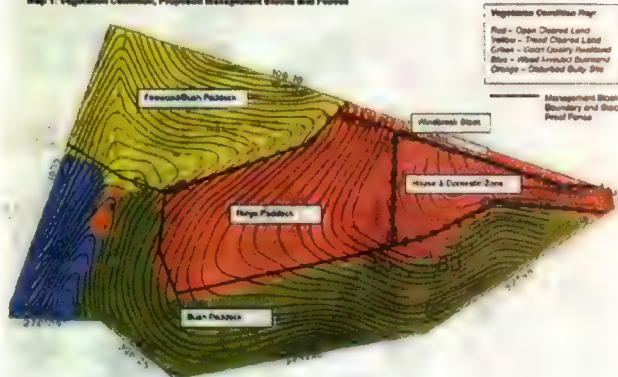
From Timbertops Reserve, Ballarat, showing the edge of large suburban blocks with back boundaries in bushland. The fences are a good approach to a yard or house paddock. It shows what kind of break is necessary and that bush can have a neat edge and be close to homes without causing a great fire hazard.

tions for future management and uses. As in permaculture, sites furthest from the house should either be left wild or managed with minimal inputs for resources that are collected intermittently. Remnant native vegetation is often protected by law and is simply impossible to replace if lost so its future should be for nature conservation. Houses, gardens, orchards and fire protection zones need to be placed in disturbed areas close to roads. Too often we try to impose our ideas on the land; yes: even groovy *Earth Garden* types, but we really need to look hard at the land first and respond well to the inherent conditions.

The plan presented here is a case study from a project where I helped a family achieve their dream of living on bush block in the hills north of Melbourne. The council wouldn't let them build a house without a 'land management plan' that made it clear that there wouldn't be negative impacts on any native vegetation that might exist there. I looked at vegetation condition, talked with them about their goals and came up with a plan that pleased all sides.

The green and blue areas included a beautiful forest of Box and Stringybark with an understorey of native shrubs, grasses and herbs such as orchids and lilies, and it became the bush paddock with no grazing. A paddock with little understorey and remnant overstorey Yellow Box that

Map 1: Vegetation Condition, Proposed Management Blocks and Paddocks



A land management plan based on the character of existing native vegetation.

would regenerate with grazing removed became the firewood paddock. The red areas where native vegetation was absent became the large house garden and grazing paddock. This zoning recognised either limitations and opportunities or a reasonable status quo.

Conclusions

I will leave the other *Earth Garden* writers to continue to concentrate on the house paddock. However, I intend to focus future articles on how to manage native vegetation for biodiversity and sustainable resource production.

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Questions & Answers

with Jackie French



If you have a question about plants, pests or possums, or just want a medieval recipe for pease pudding, pottage or plague repellent (the latter not guaranteed) email Jackie at jackief@dragnet.com.au. PS: Please don't send large emails or any attachments, especially photos — we have very poor phone lines and very slow internet speeds, all in a very deep valley so Telstra's satellite is too low in the sky for us to get satellite broadband (curse Telstra forever), and attachments or too much data mean disaster!

Fruit trees that won't blow over

Hi Jackie,

I am beginning to change my perspective on my garden, and excitedly walked outside just a moment ago realising that I actually do have more space than I thought to grow a fruit pantry!

I'd love to hear of any small fruit trees you can recommend that tolerate the wind. They would be planted in a north-facing section of my garden in Melbourne that really receives no protection from sun or wind. I am thinking of a feijoa. Any other thoughts? Many thanks for your time and insight! Stephanie.

Hi Stephanie,

The bigger and deeper the root system, the more wind-resistant your trees will be — and the more heat-, cold- and drought-resistant too.

Basically, the way the trees are grown is more important than the variety.

1. Avoid dwarf trees. Another phrase for 'dwarf varieties' is 'not very vigorous'. I've found that dwarf apple trees keel over in gales here whereas the full-sized ones are tougher than old boots.

Trouble is, many trees you may buy as full-sized are really on semi-dwarfing root stock, as few gardeners or farmers want 20-metre-high lemons, limes, oranges or apples. The trees you grow from seed will be full-sized — and their roots will be too.

2. Don't plant in the lawn! Lawns get watered often ... well, 'lawn'-type lawns do (or did) and that means that the trees' root systems tend to be small and shallow, as they don't have to hunt down deep for moisture.

Lawns are also often on shallow top soil, too, brought in and spread over the hard-packed concrete stuff left after the house was built. Again, the result is trees that easily fall in even a stiff breeze.

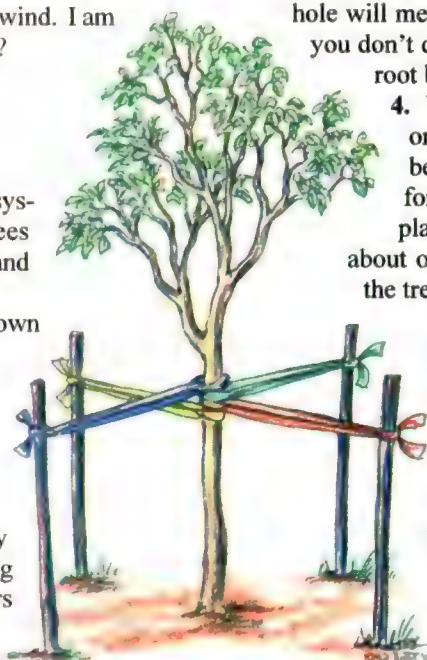
3. Encourage roots to go deep down then spread. An old-fashioned way of doing this is to dig a deep hole — as deep as you can manage. Then plant your tree in a bucket or ten-gallon drum (excuse the lack of metric here) with the base cut out. The plant will need to grow DOWN before its roots can grow OUT ... and the soft soil replaced in the hole will mean it's easy for the roots to penetrate. (If you don't do this, your poor plant may sulk and stay root bound).

4. Water deeply. This means a once-a-week or -fortnight deep slow watering, so that in between the roots need to forage down deep for moisture. Or, when you plant the tree, plant a two-metre piece of poly pipe with it about one and a half metres deep at the edge of the tree's hole.

When you want to water the tree, pour water down the pipe — the moisture will head down deep to the root level. You'll waste less water (no run off, no evaporation); the water will be going where it's needed, not wasted on the surface, and you'll also be encouraging the roots to forage downwards.

5. Don't stake trees. Instead take some old nylon stockings — or anything else with a bit of give like poly pipe or old hose, strips of t-shirts or other stretchy fabric — and tie four or five bits to the tree then stake them down about a metre out from the tree — the diagram will be

more helpful. This allows the tree to rock a bit, but still stops it being blown over till the root system has grown enough to anchor it well.



Using stretchy fabric (like old t-shirts) to stake trees.



The luxury of eating REAL Turkish Delight!

6. Don't prune the lower branches away from trees, even if it makes it easier to weed, mulch or mow under them — it makes them top heavy and liable to falling over.

7. Wet trees are heavy trees — if by any wonderful chance a windy wet season arrives, with lots of lush leaf and branch growth, it can be worth thinning trees out by pruning away thin or unwanted branches. This allows the wind to blow through them, rather than blow them over.

8. Trees protect each other. Winds may be blocked by stone or brick walls, but often 'dump' on the other side of them, causing turbulence and tree loss. But wind is slowed down as it blows through groves of trees and shrubs.

9. In very windy areas plant a line of tall, very deep-rooted trees like walnuts or pecans to help protect the others (assuming you have deep soil so they can be deep-rooted). But these are very large trees, and not suitable for a small garden except where you don't have wind and can prune off the lower branches to let in more light to other plantings.

Having said all that — citrus are more shallow-rooted than plums, apple and the like, but not so shallow-rooted that well-grown ones will fall over in strong winds. Persimmons take a good five to six years to really start growing and in that time are vulnerable to wind damage. They also have brittle branches so are best not grown in a windy spot. Ditto almonds, peach, apricot, pistachio and nectarine trees — they may not get blown over, but do risk having limbs broken off. You're probably best sticking with apples, pears, quince, plums, bramble berries, strawberries, rhubarb and grapes for your fruit pantry — all these are tough, cold-tolerant and can handle drought once established. Feijoa

can be a bit brittle, but the other plants will protect them. Hope this helps! All the best, Jackie.

Real Turkish Delight

Dear Jackie

I'm hoping that in your wealth of knowledge somewhere you have a recipe for real Turkish Delight made with rosewater. Love your columns. You are an amazing woman, I can only hope to accomplish as much as you have in one lifetime. Thanks in advance for taking the time to reply. Kelli Taylor.

Dear Kelli,

Thank you for those kind words! Hope this is the recipe you're looking for. Genuine Turkish Delight is absolutely wonderful — not the horrible red jelly goo you find in boxes of chocolates, but the real stuff, made from grape juice and sugar and cornflour with no horrible artificial red colouring or gelatine at all. It's wobbly and flesh-coloured and probably the most sensuous sweet on earth. (You probably need to eat it in a garden of orange and lemon trees, lying on a bed of silk cushions with a breeze wafting through the fountains and probably a rose garden somewhere perfuming the air.)

Turkish Delight originally comes from Persia. The ancient Persians loved all sorts of jellies. The ancestor of what we now know as Turkish Delight was one of these, *rahat lokum*, meaning 'giving rest to the throat'.

Turkish Delight isn't the easiest sweet in the world to make. It's fairly simple if you follow the directions, and

not nearly as complicated as you might think once you start making it, but it does take a lot of time. Not as much as you might think when you first read the recipe, because you can listen to music or read in snatches while the stuff bubbles. But it's not exactly a recipe you knock up between getting home from work and putting the kids to bed. And it does take a lot of stirring.

Don't let any of this turn you off. Genuine Turkish Delight is so extraordinarily stunning that all the effort is worth it — and it will be quite different from any other sweet you've ever tasted. It's also reasonably healthy — not nearly as sweet as other lollies, full of anti-oxidants if you make it with grape juice, and a little satisfies in a way that many other sweets don't.

Ingredients

- 4 cups caster sugar
- 4 cups dark grape juice (or water but it won't have a deep rich red colour unless you use — horrors! — red food colouring)
- Juice of 2 lemons or limes
- 1 cup cornflour
- 2 tbsp rosewater
- 3/4 cup icing sugar (not icing mixture)
- 1/4 cup cornflour, extra.

Take two saucepans. In the first one place the caster sugar, one and a half cups dark grape juice and the lemon juice. Boil till a little sets into a soft ball in a saucer of water.

Take off the heat.

In the next pan, place 1 cup of cornflour and 1/2 cup of grape juice. Stir to a paste then add 2 more cups of grape juice. Simmer on a low heat till thick, stirring all the time, then pour the hot syrup into the thick cornflour mixture, stirring all the time.

Simmer on a very, very low heat for about an hour. Stir every now and then. You don't need to stir it all that often till near the end of the operation.

It'll get thicker ... and thicker ... and very, very, very thick ... but don't give in. It'll be almost solid by the time it's ready. This is one of those recipes where a few extra hands in the kitchen are really useful.

When it's really, really, REALLY thick and you are quite sure it can't get any thicker and, anyway, your arm is about to break, take it off the heat and add the rose water.

Pour onto a greased tray. Leave uncovered for about 3 hours. Lightly oil a knife and cut into squares, or just gloop it up like this.

Now mix 3/4 cup of icing sugar and 1/4 cup of cornflour and roll each piece in this. Store in an airtight container. It will keep for at least a week in a cool place — not the fridge — if not a month or so, but throw out if it starts oozing or grows mould or looks funny in any way.

All the best, Jackie.

Fruit syrups for milkshakes

Hi Jackie,

My name is Norm Bailey and I was wondering if you had a recipe to make pineapple topping or syrup that can be used in milkshakes. Is there a generic recipe for all fruit or does each fruit differ? Hope you can help — I have a friend who is missing her pineapple milk shakes.

Yours, Norm Bailey.

Email: enbee@net-tech.com.au

Hi Norm,

Different fruits will need different recipes. But they are all pretty similar: that is, a thick, reduced syrup of juice and sugar with or without tartaric or citric acid or a bit of lemon or lime juice added for acid and sharpness. (Tartaric acid is made from grapes — quite safe to use.)

I have a few pineapple recipes. This is my favourite.

Pineapple syrup

4 cups puréed pineapple — bung a peeled and cored pineapple in the blender.

4 cups sugar

1 cup lemon or lime juice

2 tsp citric acid

2 tsp tartaric acid

Simmer all for about ten minutes. Bottle while still hot. Seal. Keep in a cool dark place for up to a month. Keep in the fridge after opening. Throw out if it grows cloudy, bubbles or changes looks, taste or smell in any way.

Add a good splodge — about two to three fingers at the bottom of the glass — for a milkshake. As it's very acid though make sure the milk is fresh or it may separate. This is also lovely as a topping, or can be diluted to make cordial.

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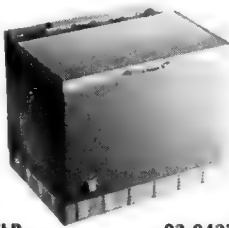
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Optional: use eight cups of commercial pineapple juice simmered till it's reduced by half (to four cups) instead of the fresh pineapple juice. Or use half fresh and half bottled juice.

Another option: add a slug of gin or rum for an adults-only, after-dark version. Or add a few leaves of mint. You can also replace the lemon or lime juice with grapefruit, or replace one cup of purée with passionfruit juice. All the best, Jackie.

Going to seed

Alexis had a problem with radish going to seed.

Alexis,

Sounds as if you are planting them at the wrong time of the year if there's a problem with carrots and beetroot too. All will go to seed if they think spring is coming after winter i.e. a warm spell after cold, or a sudden cold snap in spring. Too many books say you can plant them all year round, and there are few, if any, places where you can! Make sure they have an unchecked growing season. That is, plant late in spring or even early summer, or avoid the hottest, wettest time of the year if in the north.

All the best, Jackie

Foliar feeding

Ian Brothers, of Bridgewater, wanted to know if foliar feeding does work.

Ian,

In a word — yes. While a lot of the stuff sprayed onto

leaves does fall or is washed to the soil and is taken up by roots, plants do take up some nutrients through the stomata (the small openings located on the undersides of the leaves). It's especially useful for trace elements, but plants will also take up nitrogen and phosphorus through their leaves — extremely useful when there is any root damage or plants aren't thriving.

(Foliar feeding has been tested using radio-active phosphorus and radio-potassium to spray on plants. The spread of these elements was then tracked and measured with a Geiger counter.)

So how effective is it?

- Wax-covered or hairy leaves don't take up nutrients too well.
- The more water-soluble the elements in the spray are, the faster and more effectively they'll be absorbed.
- The best time to foliar feed is late evening to early morning, when the stomata are open.

Don't spray on hot days or hot nights either, as water vapour will be leaving the leaves. Avoid humid days too. The best time to spray is when the leaves are nicely full of water — not limp and drought-stricken, and when the leaf is dappled with dew.

If you're making your own spray, the pH should be between 6.2 and 7.0. Apply in a fine mist, under and on top of the leaves, till it just starts to collect in drips at the edge of the leaves — no more.

You should see results in a week or even less.

All the best, Jackie.

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Urban Oasis in Flemington

In the shadow of Melbourne's Western Link overpass, a coalition of professional workers and residents of the Flemington Housing Estate constructed a community garden to replace an earlier one contaminated with industrial waste. Amadis tells how it was transformed.

by Amadis Lacheta

Garden of Eden, South Melbourne

CLOSE your eyes and imagine for an instant that you are surrounded by the aroma of exotic cuisines, fresh fruit, flowers, herbs and vegetables. The sounds of many languages fill the air. You feel the kiss of the sun on your face and the warmth of friends and family, children's laughter. Where might this scene be taking place? An exotic market in a far-flung country? You may be surprised to learn that such an experience is commonplace for residents and visitors of the newly re-created Flemington Community Garden. Melbourne's reputation as one of the world's most liveable cities is enhanced by this vibrant urban oasis. So what is the Flemington Community Garden all about?

Nestled between the high-rise public housing blocks on Racecourse Road and the Moonee Ponds Creek, dwarfed by the skeleton tunnel of the motorway, is Australia's largest community garden. This patch of nature produces an abundance of fresh food, herbs and flowers for a number of residents living on the estate. The diversity of plants is reflected in the number of cultures represented by the gardeners including Turkish, East Timorese, Sudanese, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Somali, Bangladeshi, Afghani, Greek, Lebanese, Chinese, South American, Maori, and Koori. All the plots are full, and some people have two plots due to slow take up at the beginning. Now twenty or so people are on a waiting list, so second plots were allocated to them in August this year (at fee collecting time). The plots looked beautiful even in the middle of winter!

The community garden at the Flemington Housing Estate is not new. The land, which was once Debney's Park, had been cultivated by residents of the estate since 1990. However, tests confirmed that the soil in the garden was con-



Project manager Amadis in the splendid Flemington garden.

taminated with low to higher grade pollutants across the site, and this provided the perfect opportunity to remediate the soil and re-design the garden. Soil to a depth of one metre from an area of roughly 250 square metres was removed and disposed of according to EPA guidelines, and clean topsoil was brought in, separated from the original site soil by a layer of crushed rock and geo-textile fabric. The haphazard arrangements that had naturally evolved would be altered to include many more individual allotments and important garden infrastructure such as taps, benches, composting bays, tool sheds, a water tank and a garden pergola. Part of the traumatic process of residents losing their original gardens was alleviated by Cultivating Community Garden Support staff who took photos of gardeners with their plots to remind them that they would in time have their gardens back.

Three and a half years later, with the support of the Department of Human Services and Basil Natoli, the garden was ready to be re-built. The landscape design was created by ASPECT Studios in consultation with the residents, and the project management of the reconstruction was undertaken by Garden of Eden (GoE). The challenge in creating this garden was to make sure it would be completed within six months. It had the support of a Work for the Dole training program (WFD) working with skilled contractors and local residents.

Support worker Ailsa Winfield, and GoE project manager Amadis Lacheta, kept residents informed of progress in the garden via monthly meetings, and invited their participation in working bees on garden projects. While residents did not participate as fully as they might have, the monthly meetings were well attended by diverse cultural groups. Translators were on-hand at these meetings, relaying important information to the residents, and the resulting cacophony of languages was a rare and enjoyable experience! Little encouragement was necessary to get residents to put their names down for a garden plot, with half the beds filled only three months into the project. As-

cot Vale housing resident and community gardener Assi Yovanovic, a WFD participant, suggested Vasili of Vasili's Garden fame, to film the gardens. So, halfway through construction of the garden he filmed and interviewed residents and garden workers as communal beds were planted with herbs, ornamental flowers and fruit trees.

As with all community gardens, a number of talented people emerge to create this community hub that so successfully marries nature and culture. It has fantastic opportunities for engagement and friendship as well as physical benefits. Steve Beavis (45Degrees Landscaping) managed the landscape construction on behalf of GoE, and Thomas Jones supervised the WFD team on behalf of GoE. A number of skilled contractors managed by Steve contributed their labours and humour to the project. One of the more memorable were the team of mischievous older Italian concreters, for whom the work on Flemington was to be their last before retirement. Artisan builder Pete McCurley created an enchanting mud-rendered chook house, bush pole pergola, numerous seats and tables around the garden and two recycled corrugated iron tool sheds.

Inspired by indigenous architecture from around the world, in particular Africa, the chook shed, which has a beautiful natural pink ochre finish, has captured



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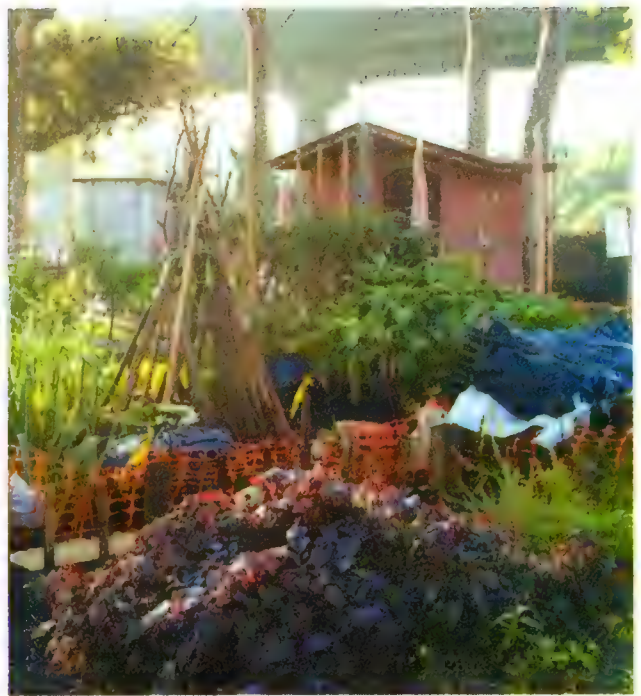
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David and Jesus show their traditional cobbling skills.

the hearts and imagination of the gardeners. The original 'PS' marked on the plan was transformed in reality from a propagation shed into the poultry shed it was always intended to be! Inside are wall-mounted rendered nesting boxes, which, after a little encouragement, are now being used by a coterie of ten chickens! The chickens are cared for by a group of residents who also collect the eggs. The chook group is very popular, with over fifteen people on a roster waiting their turn, and more wanting to sign up. The hens are all laying well, and they have become accustomed to their unusual mud-rendered laying boxes. Ailsa Winfield says the chooks are a cheerful highlight in the garden, and that everyone is drawn to them ... AND they turn green waste into fertiliser too! Recycled timber window shutters and front door have been crafted using traditional building techniques. The run is enclosed with a wire fence that is enlivened by a number of handcrafted timber posts made from *Cypress macrocarpa* with tapering curly tips. A number of beautiful timbers have been ethically sourced for the buildings in the garden including Californian Redwood from a plantation in the Otways, *Cypress macrocarpa* harvested



Early morning in the garden.

from farm windbreaks and the widening of the Geelong Road and Kunzea and *Leptospermum* from Healesville.

When it came time to render the chook shed, Pete was assisted by WFD participants, residents and friends. As is often the case, two WFD participants with just the needed skills were working on the project at the time. David from Chile and Jesus from El Salvador were master 'cobbers', creating neatly ridged rendering on the outer walls. All involved were as honoured as they were impressed to share this experience and learn new skills.

The excellent design drawn up by ASPECT Studios was modified only by the dictates of common sense, which allowed for better use of the construction budget to create a functional and beautiful garden. Extra beds, placement of paths and sheds, the inclusion of unusual garden buildings and furniture softened and gave life to a quite formal layout. Towards the end of construction, two art workshops were held with residents. Amadis Lacheta and Ailsa Winfield created a space for residents to explore cultural and garden themes by painting images from photos or memory onto recycled Jarrah fence-paling canvasses. These canvasses now adorn the internal garden fence.

The Flemington Community Garden was opened with a grand celebration in August 2005 with up to 200 people, including residents and representatives of the local council and state government bodies. Debney Meadow Primary School gave a performance and there was also music, entertainment, speeches, acknowledgements and appropriate feasting. Today the garden continues to thrive and grow, providing yet another great example of urban agriculture, social justice, creative and cultural expression in the city. Visitors can access the garden by contacting Cultivating Community on (03) 9415 6580 or info@cultivatingcommunity.org.au.

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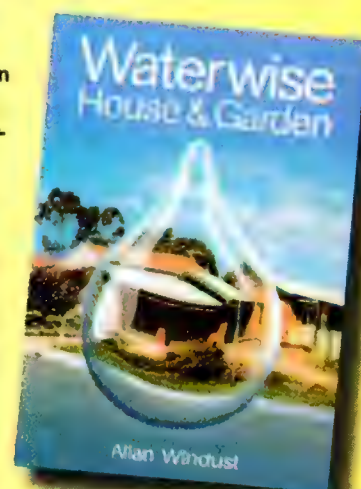
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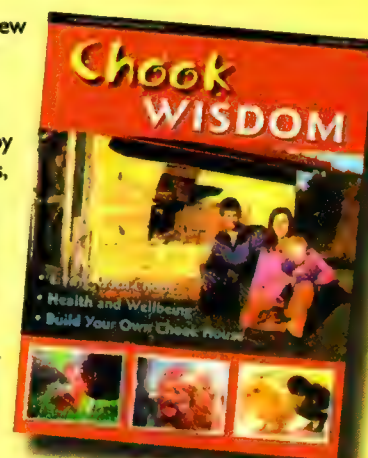
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Underfloor insulation

Dear Bob,

I've enjoyed reading your column for many years. I live in a house that is probably four-star efficient: right aspect, good insulation, water- and energy-saving devices. The problem is that I am on the side of a slope. The western side is probably about 300 mm above soil but at the other end it is more likely to be close to two metres. The underneath is not fully enclosed with boards with about 50 mm gaps. In winter the temperature can drop to -5°C . As such, the floor is freezing at the high end of the house. By the same token, we can get $40^{\circ}\text{C}+$ in summer so I don't want a situation which traps heat in then. There is little around about underfloor insulation that I can find, despite searching the web. So what would you advise for someone on a very limited budget. Would sarking (reflective foil) the floor joists be a good bet? Or should I sark the boundary. Or is a sarking blanket with a layer of insulation better. Or save the pennies for batts for the lot? I understand the sarking would give me a positive R-value of 1.0, which probably is enough. Any help or pointers would be welcome. Thanks, Paolo.

Dear Paolo,

Page 216 of the *Earth Garden Building Book* has a brief description of how to insulate under a timber floor.

First, the gaps between the boards enclosing the underfloor space are very necessary. You are almost guaranteed to get rot in the timbers if that area is not well ventilated. Also, it's a very good idea to be able to visually inspect there for termite 'tunnels'.

At the same time, if you live in an area where bushfires are possible, it's essential to keep flammable material like accumulated dry leaves out of there. My solution is to nail metal mesh flywire inside the boards.



Double-sided reflective foil under the timber floor works if there is an air space next to it.

Double-sided reflective foil under the timber floor is the way to go. This should be the kind with no ventilation holes in it. As the drawing (reproduced from the *Earth Garden Building Book*) shows, this should be nailed on the underside so it has a slight sag in the middle.

This does two things for you:

Moisture from condensation collects in the middle instead of wetting the timber. On the underside, it safely drips off. On the top, it should evaporate.

Reflective foil only works if there is an air space next to it. If you pull the foil tight, in effect you cut its insulating effect in half.

Installed in this way, double-sided foil will have an insulating effect of about R1.5, until dust gathers on the top, but even then it'll be about R1.0.

However, you can do more than this: carpet the rooms that are on the side with the big gap under them. Carpet, with the underfelt beneath it, is also substantial insulation, and will further help to cut down any drafts that come through the floorboards.

I guess you have a bit of uncomfortable upside-down work in front of you. I've done it and survived the experience. Have fun, Bob.

Rammed earth building in Thailand

Dear Bob,

I am planning to build a rammed earth sleeping room and office space in North Thailand. I will build an octagon shaped, small building, one room, 3.6-metre (12-foot) diameter, with wood posts at each corner and a cable to hold the walls in and support a roof, yurt style. This is a very basic building. I am an expat living in a Hill Tribe village.

My question is, can I use rice bran from the local mill as a strengthening fibre in my soil mixture?

The earth here is about 60 per cent clay and dries very hard. I went to a rammed earth workshop many years ago in New Mexico. They used a local plant fibre from the dried flowers of the plant for holding power.

I do have a page now: www.LisuHillTribeCrafts.blogspot.com. Check it out — I think you will find it interesting.

Thanks for whatever help you can give. Be very well, Albert.

Dear Albert,

What an intriguing life you have built for yourself! I expect you are there to do something useful, helping the locals in some way?

Just a few comments that I hope will be useful to you.

1. First, we need to look at climate. New Mexico is semi-desert, with hot sunny days and very cold nights, right? Earth walls are ideal for that kind of climate, because their thermal mass evens out temperature fluctuations. This is why earth walls are traditional in that part of the world.

If your location is at a significant elevation, earth walls may be all right. However, if it is hot and humid, there is a good chance that the walls will heat up and never cool down, so that inside will be hotter than outside. I suggest you look at the traditional local construction techniques and copy their design features. This may be light weight, with lots of ventilation.

2. Rammed earth works for relatively sandy soils. A certain proportion of clay is good because it acts as binder, reducing or eliminating the need for cement, but 60 per cent clay sounds to me like it may not be suitable.

Best is to make a sample, as described on page 100 of the fourth edition of the *Earth Garden Building Book*. Just construct any solid formwork that is easy to dismantle, and ram a section in there. Allow it to cure out of the weather for a couple of weeks, and see how good it is.

If the sample has not hardened, your soil will be better for mudbrick (adobe) walls than for rammed earth.

3. I have not heard of plant material being added to rammed earth. It seems to me to be contrary to the physics: rammed earth is in effect a three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle with the little crystals of soil being tightly squashed together. Anything that gets between them is likely to reduce cohesion.

However, if you wet the soil and make it into clay bricks, plant matter like straw is often useful to control cracking. That is, for heavy, highly reactive soils. If you have 60 per cent clay and 40 per cent sand, it is more than likely that your bricks will not crack, and therefore nothing but water should be needed.

4. Octagons are nice, but the corners are a little more tricky than for right angles. If it was a loadbearing rammed earth construction, you'd need to make special-purpose corner forms, which are TERRIBLE to set up. I have described an alternative on page 116 of the fourth edition of the *Earth Garden Building Book*. This is to use long boards held together on the corner with pin-and-socket gate hinges. However, if you have timber posts, you can design the structure so that your forms can be temporarily attached to these.

5. Finally, I don't see the need for a cable. The walls will be tied together at the corners, and are not going to go anywhere. The roof will be attached to your corner posts. Your octagon is inherently stable, and doesn't need to be sewn together.

Like I said at the start, the primary question is whether an earth-walled building is suitable to your climate. We don't want you to become the well-cooked American! Have fun, Bob.



A Thai forest village: traditional local construction techniques may be light weight, with lots of ventilation.

Bob Rich has been writing for *Earth Garden* for longer than any other contributor, apart from Keith Smith, the magazine's founding publisher. These two are the authors of the very popular *Earth Garden Building Book*, which is now in its fourth edition.

However, Bob has other titles as well. His second book was *Woodworking for Idiots Like Me*, a series of amusing stories that teach woodcraft as well. This one was in print between 1994 and 1999. It is now out again, but in a completely different format. In effect, it's a large web page you can read on a computer, or on a variety of handheld devices. This gives it many advantages over a paper book: it doesn't eat trees; it costs half as much (even less if you count the cost of postage); you can view it at varying magnifications (every e-book can be a large print); and you can jump about within it using hyperlinks.

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A Bathtub Drinking Trough

Running beef cattle was the last thing on Allan and Kate's agenda, but it did happen, and then they found they had to improvise a reliable system for supplying them with water. Here's how they did it.

by Allan James and Kate O'Dwyer

Stanthorpe, Queensland



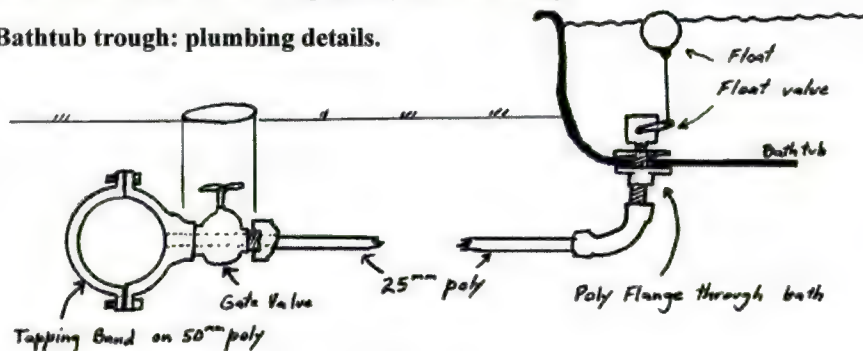
EVER bought, say, a green brand x car and all of a sudden started to see green brand x cars all over the place that you never noticed before? This is what happened to us with our cattle. For about twelve years we had been happily living part time on our 50-hectare block near Stanthorpe in southern Queensland, where we were either building some mudbrick shed or generally improving 'Bestblock' for our retirement, or else we were cranking up our old motorhome bus for our yearly trip north to do our seasonal work in a cotton gin in central Queensland.

Semi-retirement was good with our only animal responsibility our dog Maverick. Mr Best, the previous owner, still ran some cattle on agistment which meant that 'Bestblock' looked tidy, the bushfire risk was lower and the council rate bill was covered. Apart from the breed, Poll Hereford and some Angus cross, we did not take any notice of his animals at all except when they were a nuisance on our kilometre-long track and were too stubborn to move off. Then we would curse and toot and call them all the usual rude names.

All this changed dramatically when Mr Best passed away and we suddenly realised we needed his cattle to stay so we bought the animals from his estate.

Aren't we humans strange critters? Overnight, our attitude towards the cattle changed once they were ours. We now owned 14 heifers and a bull, and it is funny how we soon started to notice all their habits, got to recognise each one and even started to notice all the other Poll Hereford cattle in the district that were probably there all along.

Bathtub trough: plumbing details.



Good clean water

One thing that we did know about cattle was that they needed plenty of good clean water to drink; so it was very opportune when a garage sale came up at a local farm where we were able to buy all sorts of farm goodies, including one of those huge old cast iron baths for twenty dollars. This would be ideal for the cattle drinking trough we needed for a section of the farm we had fenced off where there was no dam. We could bury, out of harm's way, a 25 mm black poly feeder pipe the 200 metres across from our main 50 mm gravity-fed damwater pipe. We had previously installed it to water our ginseng plot down the hill. Don't you just love gravity — no pumps needed!

Our local Aqua shop would have all the plumbing fittings we required. First on the list was a tapping-band. Sometimes called a saddle, these great gadgets just clamp over a larger pipe after you use a hole-saw to drill the smaller outlet size. They save heaps of time and money compared to trying to fit a Tee piece. They are also handy if you get a hole in a pipe. Just clamp it over the hole, put a bung in the outlet and it's fixed. The size we needed was 50 mm with a 25 mm outlet. We took in an off-cut from the 50 mm pipe to make sure we ended up with exactly the right sized tapping band as the old two inch size can cause a problem with a metric pipe. Next fitting was a 25 mm gate valve to turn the water off if needed, followed by a 200 m roll of 25 mm rural quality poly with the appropriate end connectors. Always be very careful that you don't kink poly as you unroll it. Pull it out from the

middle while untwisting it as you pull but have someone guiding the roll as well in case of a snag.

Fitting the float valve

Two more important bits completed the plumbing side of the job. One was a nice big poly double flange (poly tank outlet) that fitted through the plug-hole part of the bath so the water supply can come magically up from underground well

away from heavy and damaging cattle hooves.

Now you have two choices here. If your bath has no plug fitting fitted you will need a large diameter poly flange, as the hole is quite large. Use some silicone as you tighten the flanges together against the porcelain of the bath. This should leave adequate poly thread protruding down under the bath to screw a right-angled bend to attach to the poly feeder pipe. However, if your bath has a plug fitting already you will need to drill and chop and file to remove the strainer part where the plug goes so you can pass the threaded part of a smaller diameter flange through the hole. Check which one you will need before you go shopping. You will also have to cut any excess old brass thread from underneath with a hacksaw so your new poly flange will have plenty of its own thread exposed to attach to the right-angled bend.

When all this is done, all you need to do is screw in the last fitting, which is a new type of float valve (Rojo, 20 mm) that screws into the flange at the plug-hole. Adjust the length of cord so the float valve turns the water off at a good level and hey presto, one reliable animal drinking trough. No need to cover the float valve to protect it from rough cattle as all the plumbing comes up from the bottom.

Some handy hints

- Place your bathtub where it can be seen easily so you can always check the water level at a glance. Near a driveway

would be good so you can check from the car every time you pass. Water for animals is so important. Consider placement under a fence to water two paddocks.

- Be careful as you drill at the tapping band that the drill bit does not go right through and damage the far side of the pipe.
- Birds love to drink too! So place something over the edge of the bath so birds can drink without falling in.
- Have your bathtub on its side while you attach all the fittings then simply roll it upright when you are ready.
- Secure the tub so it can't be knocked over. We laid rocks in cement mortar around ours. Sinking it into the ground a bit will also help keep the poly pipe deeper and safer underground.
- Remember too, heavy cast iron baths will not rust out easily but the pressed tin ones will not give you a hernia when lifting them.

Footnote

All our heifers are now cows as they each gave birth to lovely little calves. We use Pat Coleby's book *Healthy Cattle Naturally* as a reference to keep the animals in good nick.

By the way, if visiting and the cows are lying on the track asleep, please park up and walk the rest of the way. Never drive around them as the bit of grass your tyres flatten may be the bit of grass our darlings wanted to eat when they woke up and of course we wouldn't want to upset them would we!

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Permaculture

in Hindsight

Holiday making during the bushfire season can be a fraught experience for landholders. However, it can be interesting to return and see what has happened without your own intervention, as Bruce discovered.

by Bruce Hedge
Newham, Victoria

Going Away and Coming Back

THE DAY we left for our holiday, the sun appeared as a strange red orb hanging above Mt Macedon. I'd never seen smoke so thick around our area from bushfires before. We'd prepared our house and property as well as we could for the fortnight in New Zealand to follow, but the fear of fire was always there, even though regular updates via the internet cafés along the way gave us some confidence that all was well in our area. I cannot imagine how we'd have fared if we'd left from an area under threat from the fires, but this holiday had been planned for so long and I wasn't going to miss it.

We'd hired a mini storage shed in the nearby town, and had transferred all the irreplaceables to that just in case, and had tested the sprinkler setup on the roof. A laminated brief set of instructions next to the fire pump was perhaps an optimistic gesture to anyone coming by in the event of a major fire, but our dam is well known to the local CFA, and it might have helped.

We left Australian shores to land in the South Island of the country just across the Tasman Sea which was bright green, had grass a metre high in the paddocks, and every tiny stream was flowing copiously across extraordinarily fertile plains! It felt like we saw more rain on the first two days than we'd seen in the past six months in Central Victoria! The locals were starting to say enough was enough, but the situation across the Tasman was ever

present at sunset, when smoke from Australian fires tinged the sky brown and red. The guides on our Fox Glacier walk said they could see Australian dust and smoke particles in the layers of snow as that great river of ice flowed ever onwards towards the sea. The terminal face is actually advancing at present, after near record snowfalls at altitude, and is only 250 metres above sea level at its face. It seems that climate change is having a beneficial effect on some areas in our region.

Remarkable New Zealand

The only thing absolutely certain about climate change is its total uncertainty and unpredictability!

After living in Australia for 34 years, I was unprepared for the lump in my throat as I travelled through the ever more spectacular scenery which I'd taken for granted as I grew up. New Zealand really is a remarkable country. See it when you can.

Returning to our wide brown land, I was pleasantly surprised to see 16 mm of rain in the gauge. Enough to put 3000 welcome litres in the tanks. The garden was alive and well, having been lovingly watered by neighbours' children — I think the birds got more strawberries than they did! Potted plants, including a gift Wollemi Pine fared well under a drip irrigation system programmed

to give a watering every day, and overall there were no major losses. Wandering across to the other end of the block, however, revealed a startling sight! The largest wattle on the place, a black wattle planted 24 years ago and now about eighteen metres high, had split in two, and a huge branch had flattened several nearby fruit trees, including a favourite cooking apple, Bramley's Seedling, chock-full



of fruit, just about ready to net against the rampant, hungry hordes. This year they're getting into the fruit even earlier than last year, and the usual suspects have been joined by a flock of a dozen or so Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos. These are huge birds — much bigger than the familiar white Sulphur-crested. Being ever an optimist, however, I didn't lament the loss of the trees — they might come again with some judicious pruning and re-working this winter. No, instead I saw three month's supply of firewood in that huge tree. Now all I need is a couple of strong wwoofers to help cut it up!

Self-sown

Another pleasant surprise was my self-sown lettuce patch. We'd let a few of the better lettuces go to seed last year, and they germinated all over the garden! One bed, which was vacant, had hundreds of tiny plants popping up and with a watering or two erupted forth with vigour! It's wonderful to go out and cut large quantities of fresh, vital young leaves to make a salad and have the bed continue producing over a two- to three-month period. We'll move some mature plants with seed heads to another area to allow self-seeding on a fresh area next season. Self-sowing: a perfect permaculture practice!

And now to an interesting observation about our dam which has caused me to rethink the original design. The dam was designed along Keyline principles in 1978. One feature I'd incorporated was a perched smaller dam within the main dam, which filled from the feeder channels first, then overflowed into the main dam. The idea was that this perched dam acted as a silt trap, and caught water first at a higher level, so that a larger area could be irrigated by gravity flow as the water is higher in the landscape. Also, less energy is needed to pump the water to a tank at a higher level. One Keyline principle is to capture water at the highest practical point in a landscape. In the real world, however, I've found that this perched dam dries out quickly, and takes a large quantity of water in the rare flows after a flash rainfall to fill it before it overflows into the main dam. I find it's a chore to move the pump to take advantage of this higher water, so inevitably it's not used. It would have



One lettuce bed had hundreds of tiny plants popping up and, with watering, erupted with vigour! Self-sowing: a perfect permaculture practice!

been better to allow the water to flow into the main dam to add to the larger storage to be used more easily. I suspect the silt trap aspect works well, but I'll lower the overflow from the perched dam tomorrow to take advantage of this weekend's promised rain event. Promises, promises!

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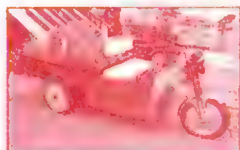
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The other choice is to offset the emissions with renewable energy generation if you believe this is more effective. Climate Friendly is an Australian, 'profit for a purpose' company that purchases Green power on your behalf to neutralise your carbon emissions. If you use their online calculator at www.climatefriendly.com.au you'll find that offsetting 4.3 tonnes of Greenhouse gas emitted by your car will cost \$90.90 per year. That's for a 1.9 litre petrol car driven 400 km a week.

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ages as presents for friends and family. They are the only Australian company endorsed by major international non-government organisations to apply Greenhouse offsets.

However, in four States of Australia, you'd be better off simply ringing your local electricity company and switching to 100 per cent Green power if you want to offset your household emissions. If you go to www.green-electricitywatch.org.au you'll find that Origin Energy's GreenEarth Solar and GreenEarth Wind and TRUenergy Wind Power came out tops in SA, NSW, Victoria and the ACT, with Climate Friendly (see above) the next best option in any other State. Good luck!

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by Peter McDonald

Melbourne, Victoria

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The BirdBusta system works on two levels — firstly, it hides the fruit from birds so they don't stop in your garden and start decimating your crop. And secondly, with fewer birds in the garden, it dramatically reduces the number of other birds that are attracted to the site.



I've made the system very easy to use and all you need is some of my (patent pending) clips and some paper cups from the local supermarket. You simply attach a clip to a branch near the piece of fruit you want to protect and a paper cup to the other end of the clip — it literally takes seconds to do and the results are amazing.

The BirdBusta system can protect fruit as they ripen progressively through the season and, being easily detached and shifted to another fruit, it can be used to protect early plums, and later on, apricots, tomatoes and figs.

BirdBusta is new to the Australian market and is a departure from traditional methods of protection that rely heavily on sound alarms, scarecrows, nets and vibrating and reflecting metallic ribbons. BirdBusta clips are available from www.birdbusta.com or by calling (03) 9819 7886 for more information.

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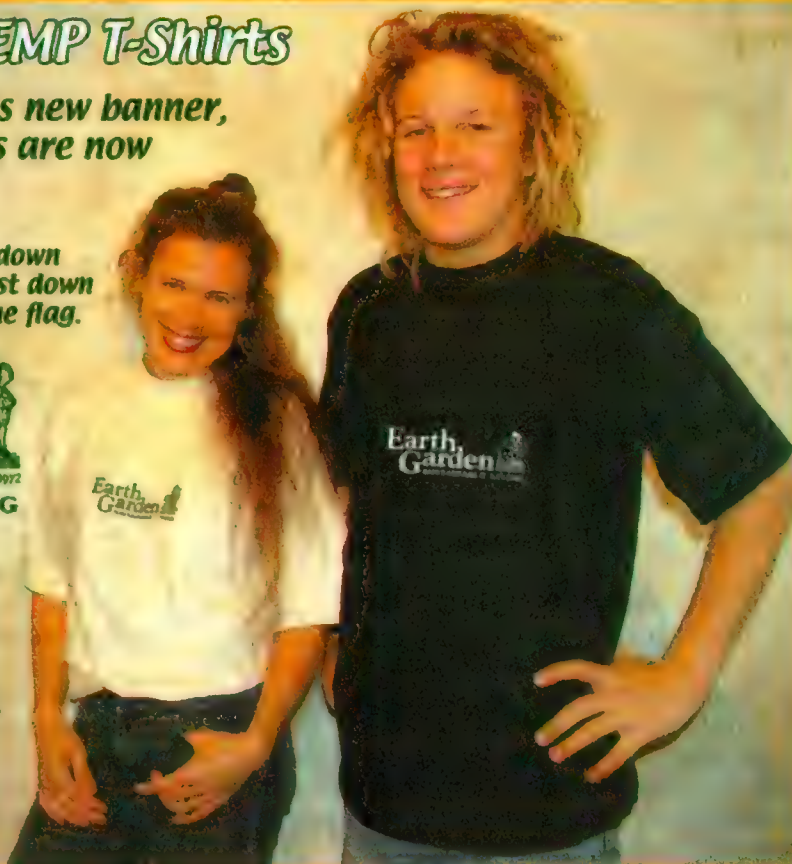


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Living With Your Local Koala

Gail Bruce, a wildlife ranger who shares Queensland's Redland Shire with 4000 koalas, describes how to coexist happily with these furry marsupials.

by Gail Bruce
Capalaba, Queensland



THE REDLAND Shire, bordering Brisbane, hosts the bulk of south-east Queensland's vulnerable koala populations. The state government has drawn the line on future development in much of the shire. However, 75 per cent of the koalas in the shire live in developed areas where their favourite blue gums grow. In these areas the community will be the driving force behind the future of the urban koala.

Is that a wild pig I hear?

New residents in the Redland Shire often mistake a male koala's grunts for those of a wild pig. Indeed, the female koala also squeals like a pig when a male is pursuing her. Venture outside with a torch at night and you may see her, high in a tree on the flimsiest of limbs, attempting to escape. Look further and sometimes there will be a smaller koala perched precariously out of harm's way. Some males are known to have bad tempers (koalas that is) if they are given the 'no' answer.

A 'dogged' problem

Take the previous scenario; add a dog or two and you have a recipe for disaster. An innocent koala will be treated like any other intruder by most dogs. Even the smallest nip from a dog can be fatal: its internal organs are just beneath the skin and, once penetrated, a slow, cruel death will follow. In the seven years I worked as a wildlife ranger in the Redland Shire, on average one koala a week met its death in this way. The shire council has attempted to enforce overnight containment of dogs, but each time backed down due to the outrage of dog owners.

Food and shelter both important

Koalas in urban areas must have access to as many trees as possible to survive. They are fussy eaters and know exactly where to find their favourite food trees. They usually will spend a night or two in the same tree before moving on. I keep a diary for the koalas that visit my yard noting which tree is used each time. It is not unusual to find koalas sheltering during the day in shady trees like mangoes, poincianas and even camphor laurels.

Koala friendly fences — a better choice

Fences can create lots of problems for urban koalas. Wooden poles leant up against either side of the fence (or better still, trees planted on either side) provide quick escapes for koalas. In the wild, koalas can jump from canopy to canopy; in the suburbs koalas are vulnerable when crossing open ground. While solid fences have become popular, they have also created impenetrable barriers in the koalas' territory.

Drive slower at night — a must in koala areas

The biggest hurdle for urban koalas is traffic. Our famous 'koala speed zone' trials, where drivers were limited to 60 kpm between 7 pm and 6 am in the koala breeding season, were abandoned by authorities who claimed it failed to make a significant reduction in mortality. This was probably one of the worst decisions ever made. On the main road outside my house, there is at least one koala a month killed. However, later this year, the Department of Main Roads will install an overhead bridge designed for koalas to cross: the first of its kind in Australia.

Koalas can swim but ...

Although the Aboriginal name koala means 'drink no water', koalas cannot always draw enough moisture from gum leaves. Unfortunately, many of the original creeks in the shire have been channelled into underground pipes. Thirsty koalas will sometimes find their way to swimming pools to drink. Although they can swim their claws cannot grip pool surfaces to climb out should they fall in. A piece of timber left across one corner of the pool, preferably near the step, will prevent a tragedy.

Experts at capturing sick koalas

A koala suffering from the sexually transmitted disease chlamydia will be looking for water: the disease is linked to nutritional stress. A constantly-dripping bladder dehydrates the animal, which needs urgent medical attention. The koala will most likely have a brown wet bottom and sometimes conjunctivitis or both. Some residents have become expert at capturing sick koalas. They place water at

the base of the tree and wait until the koala climbs down to drink. Then they quietly place a cardboard box over it with a heavy object on top. If the sun is too hot, the box can be gradually pushed to the shade until help arrives.

Write a letter to help save our koalas

The survival of Redland Shire's urban koala populations will ultimately depend on the attitude of the community and its willingness to ensure yards are koala friendly. Local and state authorities should be encouraged to take a strong stance for the protection of urban koalas in this part of the world. **Write to: Chief Executive Officer, Redland Shire Council, PO Box 21 Cleveland 4163. Email The Honorable Lindy Nelson-Carr MP, Minister for Environment, EandM@ministerial.qld.gov.au.**

Postscript

On June 20, after years of lobbying from the local Koala Action Group, the council finally released new draft animal control laws for a six-week public consultation period. Under the new laws, dog owners on properties larger than 2000 square metres in Koala Management Areas will have a choice to either confine their dogs to a fenced area no greater than 2000 square metres at all times, or lock up the dog in a small enclosure between 7 pm and 6 am. Or, at those times, they may choose to tie up the dog on a lead no longer than three metres. While this is finally a step in the right direction, it affects less than six percent of the Shire's 20,000 dogs.



Koalas are vulnerable when crossing open ground. While solid fences have become popular, they have also created impenetrable barriers in the koalas' territory.

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Great Nana Technology

There's not much you could tell past generations about frugal living, and there's a lot of knowledge passed down through families orally. Here Margaret, who grows a few vegetables in pots, she says, passes on some tips.

by Margaret Currie
Carrara, Queensland

I HAVE just read the Nana Technology piece in the latest *Earth Garden* magazine. As I am a nana, that makes my mother a great-nana — in more ways than one.

She had a circle of friends who gave her cast-off clothing from which she cut skirts and dresses for my sister and I. These were made up on an old Singer treadle sewing machine.

Her auntie (my grandmother's youngest sibling) ran a private hospital in Gippsland, Victoria. She made bedside lockers from wooden orange crates given to her by the local fruiterer. The boxes were turned on one end with the open side covered with a pretty piece of material. When she grew tired of her hat in one style she would change the ribbon or add beads or flowers. Each time she took us to the village to shop she would check out the bootmaker's window for shoes from customers who had not picked them up within the stipulated period. They were sold for the price of the repairs.



The treadle-powered sewing machine:
as useful for clothing repairs as for
boutique one-offs.

As kids, we laughed behind her back. When she retired to Phillip Island we stayed with her during the school holidays. As a reward for unloading us girls for a couple of weeks, Dad would have to make a trip with auntie to check out treasures in the local tip.

We thought she was mean. In our minds, even my mother we considered stingy. Nothing was wasted. The tiny remaining slivers of bath soap were stuck to the new cake while both were wet.

One thing I remember fondly is my mother growing all the household nuts, fruit and vegetables. The taste, compared to the supermarket substitute is not even worth the comparison. Fruit was bottled in the copper until my mother bought a Vacola bottling outfit.

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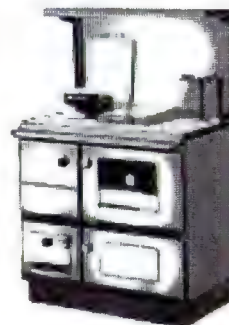
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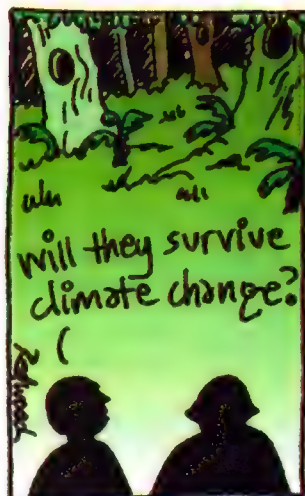
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Standing Up For Forests

A HISTORIC win in the Federal Court in late December over logging in Wielangta State Forest in Tasmania's south east should force greater protection of endangered animals and plants across Australia, according to The Wilderness Society (TWS). TWS National Strategic Campaigns Coordinator, Virginia Young, said the landmark court win for Greens Senator Bob Brown will mean destruction of endangered species and its habitat by logging operations can no longer happen under the cover of Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs).

"This is a milestone for Australia's rapidly eroding environment," Senator Brown said. "This nation has one of the longest lists of creatures forced to, or towards, extinction in recent times. The EPBC Act, meant to reverse this loss, has been flouted at Wielangta and, doubtless, in clearfell logging and burning and poisoning operations for the export woodchip industry elsewhere in Australia. The industrial loggers, like Gunns Ltd, will be furious. But most Australians will celebrate the great commonsense as well as



legal strength of the judgement," Senator Brown said.

"This is a watershed for Australia's forests and wildlife. No doubt, though, the woodchippers and their Labor and Liberal backers will be furious. We must expect an angry reaction like that which followed the High Court decision which stopped the Franklin Dam on 1 July 1983," Senator Brown said. Ms Young said both the Prime Minister John Howard and Labor leader Kevin Rudd now have a window of opportunity to immediately protect high conservation value forests.

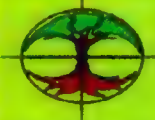
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Earth People Write continued from page 7

Back copies for sale

Hi there,

I have long been a reader of your wonderful magazine, but as I am now an aged pensioner and have very little/no room for storage of my beloved magazines, I have decided to sell the ones I have on hand. I have 48 magazines left after I gave some away. Now I have left magazine numbers 84, 77, 64, 60, 49, 39, 27 and 12; plus numbers 89 to 123. I am asking \$3 each for these as they are in good condition and there are 144 in all. Please, if you want them can you pay the postage/freight, as I simply cannot afford to do this. I need the money I earn from this to cover my rates and the like. Keep up the good work everyone. I will continue to read *Earth Garden* but these days it will be through the local library. I live a very simple life of self-sufficiency in my garden trying to make the pension go round.

Jo Wall de Gallo. Ph: (07) 4097 9010, PO Box 148, Mt Garnet, Qld 4872.

Summer in the Cotswolds

Dear *Earth Garden*,

After a long warm summer and autumn we are finally getting some of the cold weather we should be having now. We have had some good frosts and glorious sunny days; some fog today too. I've cleaned out the greenhouse and put my little lemon trees and pittosporums in there, covering them with fleece on the colder nights. I'll probably try to pin up some bubblewrap too, as an insulator.

We had some marvellous crops of apples; a kind neighbour has let me scrimp loads of wonderful Bramley's Seedling apples; a real treat. I picked and froze lots of blackberries and there is nothing like blackberry and apple crumble after a game casserole made with loads of mushrooms and shallots and eaten with mashed spuds and parsnips or braised red cabbage! This all in front of a roaring open fire burning well-seasoned beech. A woodburning stove isn't possible in this house without a major new fireplace, thanks to new regs on vertical-only flues. As it's a church house we don't feel like spending the sort of money needed for that caper! The beech was from a fallen branch in one of our churchyards and very kindly rough cut and delivered to us by the estate in which that church is situated.

Our daughter was over from Aus in the early summer and helped us to split up the beech and also plant the tomatoes. We had massive crops of these and I

have preserved lots for the winter. She also helped us to plant our potted gum trees in a line well away from the house. These are called after our four grandsons: Christopher, Michael, Nicholas and Samuel and they are all thriving, even C which was very large and VERY pot-bound.

Anyway, enough rambling from the Cotswolds (we are so lucky to be living in this area, officially an AONB: Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). Mind you, the area where our little farm sits is beautiful too, in Victoria.

Anne Jessop, Gloucestershire, England.

Retread compost bins

Dear Friends,

As a regular reader of your wonderful magazine I continue to be amazed at the many ways in which readers continue to come up with ideas to recycle materials into useful things. For the information of others I would like to pass on what I use for compost bins.

With a double household block in the mid-western town of Wellington in NSW, I have a large amount of grass clippings and of course the usual collection of food scraps from the kitchen and weeds. I have access to horse manure from the local racing stables and cow yards where cattle are herded overnight by drovers on the nearby stock routes. I also obtain the grass clippings from a couple of other houses instead of them conveying this valuable material to the local tip. By scouring around the roads as I travel I have gathered up twenty truck tyre rims of the full retread that has been cast off by trucks on the road. By placing one on top of the other up to five high I have four rather good compost heaps into which I just throw all my composting materials as they come to hand. I also have three other small plastic compost bins.

I fill these smaller bins from the large tyre bins as the smaller ones empty with layers of semi-decomposed compost from a tyre ring and then add layers of manure and grass clippings till the small bin is full. It is surprising how quickly this partly-made compost completes the job. I usually find that by the time I get to the bottom couple of truck tyres of a stack that it is already fully matured compost.

By using this method I have plenty of room to store my compost material and have a large amount of compost always on hand for the garden. The tyres appear to have something that decomposes the materials into compost quickly and it keeps the area neat and tidy. If desired I can start a new stack anywhere and thus do not have to convey the material over a distance. These tyres seem to have a long

life. Some I have been using for over ten years and no sign of wearing out.

Frank Frost, Wellington, NSW.

Up all night with EG

Hi All,

I think your new format is great and I look forward to when the next issue comes out. The only trouble is when it arrives I am in for a late couple of nights because I can't stop reading it until it is finished; then I have to be content to look again and again until the next quarter's news. Thank you for such a great magazine.

Arthur Garske, Winston Hills, NSW.

Plastic bag horrors

Dear Earth Gardeners,

Thanks for your magazine; you sound to me like people who like to go on with what Mother Earth has got to offer. Thanks for Jill Redwood's message: we have got also the horrors when the plastic shopping bags sometimes hang in a fence — I go and pick them up so no cattle will munch them.

Ursula Siebert, Lock, SA.

Ethics of food

Dear *Earth Garden* readers,

I have an ethical dilemma and thought that there's bound to be a reader out there with the answer.

The bee in my bonnet is to do with shopping for basic groceries and household supplies in an earth-friendly way. I have been trying to make sure as much of the food I buy is organic or biodynamic, thereby supporting sustainable farming practices and not supporting GM. But when I visit different organic shops I've noticed a lot of their non-fresh produce (such as cans, pasta, biscuits) are made overseas.

This brings me to my dilemma. I always try to buy Australian-made and locally produced, so I am supporting our farmers, and not contributing so much to vast amounts of energy used to transport food long distances.

So my dilemma is which is more important: Australian-made, or organic?

Is it better to buy supermarket-brand spaghetti or organic but made in Sri Lanka, for example?

Anyone who has wrestled with these concepts — I would really appreciate an email outlining your thoughts. ladysonetimes@yahoo.com.au
Vebeica, Noble Park, Victoria.

Speaking up for animals

Hello folks,

I happened to come across this latest release DVD: *Earthlings*, a movie-length

documentary, narrated by Joaquin Phoenix. This is about how we humans use non-humans as food, entertainment, sport and so on. I watched it and what I saw will be with me forever. I speak for the animals; they are my concern. It's not about the human condition called the 'me factor' any more, it's now about them.

Please watch it.

Julie, Bega Valley, New South Wales
moopip@bigpond.com.au.

Sourcing Stevia

Hi Tom,

Read your letter in *Earth Garden*. I obtained some *Stevia* plants from the Diggers Club, PO Box 300, Dromana, Vic. 3936, phone 035987 1877 or web www.diggers.com.au

I purchased a couple of plants that arrived beautifully healthy and very carefully packed, and have gone on to flourish and provide good sugar replacement.

Thought I'd let you know of this source also.

Best wishes,

Eden. From the *Earth Garden* website.

Joe Blakes in the mulch

Hi,

I wanted to post a warning to all the lovers of mulch after an experience I had this week.

While mowing the lawn near a pile of grass cuttings I saw a very lively Red-bellied Black Snake burrow it's way into the pile.

Given that two days before I had been moving a similar pile by hand, it gave me a bit of a shock. I had always assumed that one would see a hole if a snake was in residence but, of course, the grass simply dropped around the entrance without a trace.

My new mulch moving technique involves a long-handled rake and extreme caution!

Hope this can be made known somehow to alert others who may not have yet got the message to be careful around piles of grass!

Sandra Gardner. From the *Earth Garden* website.

Eco-friendly builders in Tassie?

Dear *Earth Garden* personnel,

I read your articles on the building of your strawbale office. Do you know of any builders in Northern Tasmania who are involved in eco-friendly building? At present, my husband and I live in Wauchope, NSW, but are planning to move to Tasmania in the near future.

My daughter has a property north-east of Launceston, and we plan to build somewhere in that area.

Patricia Crane. From the *Earth Garden* website.

Hi Patricia,

It might be worth also posting your query on the 'Earth Garden Path' at www.earthgarden.com.au, where Path members may be able to point you in the right direction. All the best.

—Fiona.

A special magazine

Earth Garden,

Oh! I hang my head in shame — I forgot my subscription was due. Most wonderful magazine out — so much reading by every member of the family. A lot of good information and help on many a subject.

Good value, keep up the good work.

Cheers — love you all — a special magazine.

Ivy Redman, Parklea, New South Wales.

Quick notes

Dear *Earth Garden*,

Thanks again for all the moments of serenity, joy, wisdom and reflection your ("our!") wonderful magazine brings.

Kerry and Jill.

Thanks for the excellent publication — I read it cover to cover — always feeling comforted and inspired!

Jane.

Gully as charged

Earth Garden,

I've done nothing all afternoon but read *Earth Garden* — and it's all your fault!! It's going to be even worse when I get on to your new website.

Isabelle Kirkbridge, Alice Springs, Northern Territory.

For fast, go to Surfers

Dear *Earth Garden*,

Reading about Gary Thomas visiting the Slow Food Movement HQ (EG 138) prompted me to write. If more people got out of bed earlier and organised themselves better, they too could enjoy eating their food slowly. What is the rush?

Bearing this in mind, I thought you may be interested in a sign which I copied in a café on my favourite and mostly unspoilt island, North Stradbroke in Moreton Bay near Brisbane, years ago:

We are not fast. We are good. We are cheerful. We are courteous. But we are

not fast. For fast, go to Surfers Paradise. Here, we are east of the tension line. So relax, unwind and give us time to prepare your meal with TLC.

Kind regards,

Jack Miller, Chandler, Queensland.

Kangaroo farming?

Dear all,

Drought, climate change (or for those aware, global warming).

There is a wealth of information that points out many areas being denied their potential to provide suitable amounts of food all because of the trend of trying to sustain western methods of farming, using western animals such as cows and sheep.

I read an article that stated in eastern Africa they are now only providing 40 per cent of the food they used to be able to harvest due to clearing and introducing cattle. If they had only kept the natural animals to that environment, and farm them instead they most likely would not be facing some of the problems that they are.

Anyways — all this has got me thinking. How long will it take before kangaroos become the main animal farmed in Australia?

Whilst I have never eaten kangaroo meat, from what I've heard it's quite good eating, and given the kangaroo's ability to survive through years of drought, surely it is only a matter of time before it's widely available and becomes a major part of our diet.

I haven't searched too hard for any info about roo farms. Does anyone know if there are any up and running at the present time?

'Cornonthecob'. From the *Earth Garden* website.

Seeking advice at Tiaro

Hello all at *Earth Garden*,

Melissa and myself purchased a small acreage around seven months ago here in Tiaro, Qld. It has roughly five acres and has a gorgeous creek running through the centre, but after many years of being cattle country it is quite lifeless. We have so far planted a variety of local native trees, fruit trees and vegetables and are now in process of building a small home from splitface blocks that we picked up quite cheaply.

We would like to put out a call to fellow *EG* readers who have any seeds or advice on solar to contact us, as we are within a limited budget. Any advice or even just a chat would be great.

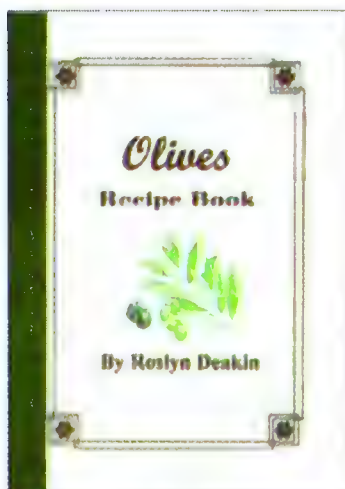
Thank you.

'TiaroCp' patkai@hotmail.com. From the *Earth Garden* website.

EARTH GARDEN REVIEWS

BOOKS AND MUSIC

Edited by Judith Gray



Olives

By Roslyn Deakin

Self-Published R. Deakin

**PO Box 396, Croydon,
Vic. 3163**

**A4 Black and white
100 pages \$22.95***

This is the most incredible collection of recipes dedicated to the olive that I think anyone will ever see. Don't be fooled by this book's plain no frills appearance. With one hundred pages of recipes (at least four recipes to the page) it is most comprehensive.

Start with dips and soups, move onto all manner of meat including rabbit and venison. Vegetables, salad, pasta and rice are all included along with techniques for preserving and marinating. Roslyn has obviously collected her recipes from far and wide with many people contributing, which creates a fabulously multi-cultural collection. There is something for everyone here: roast capsicum terrine with basil and olives; lamb with potatoes, artichokes and olives; candied walnut gorgonzola cheese salad. The list goes on and is most inspiring.

Sustainable Fresh Water Aquaculture

**(The Complete Guide From
Backyard to Investor)**

By Nick Romanowski

Published by UNSW Press

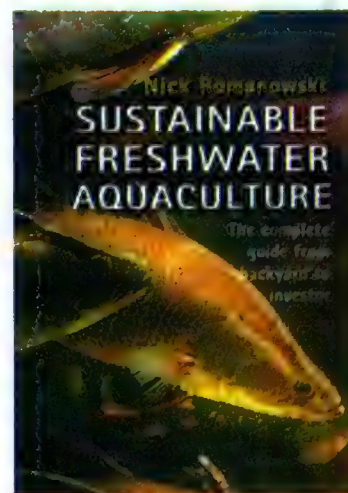
A4 full colour 184 pages

\$44.95*

It is obvious from reading Nick's preface, 'Towards Sustainability', that he holds grave concerns about the farming, or should we say feed-lotting, of marine fish. I suppose the principle of thinking globally and acting locally is being practical when one grows fish as a source of food in one's own dam. Not dissimilar to the henhouse in the backyard. Truly sustainable and integrated into a comprehensive garden plan, use this book as a complete guide to growing both fish and water plants locally and help step more lightly on the planet.

The twelve chapters that make up this book are a comprehensive study of water quality, permits required, the breeding of fish, crabs and prawns, as well as the all important plants that Nick is known so well for. Make yourself some small ponds or even modify existing dams. Learn about aeration, filters and recycling as well as water treatment wetlands.

This book is ideal for the backyard operator as well as the commercial grower. Learn about raising, marketing and transporting crayfish, yabbies, freshwater prawns and others. Did you know that a crayfish grows in 'jumps' rather than in even progression? They shed their shell when they are feeling crowded by the old shell. It is then that they need shelter to avoid being cannibalised by their own kind! Yabbies will tolerate a wide range of temperatures, which makes them extremely adaptable. The commercial



production of the yabby in Australia is around 120 tonnes a year, fetching \$8 to \$13 a kilo.

A Nick Romanowski book wouldn't be complete without detailed discussion of edible plants and water quality plants. Nick also discusses hydroponics and gives weed warnings as well. This book is beautifully presented with inspirational colour photos and diagrams. Don't imagine yourself a freshwater aquaculturalist without this book.

Chicken Coops

**(45 Building Plans for
Housing Your Flock)**

By Judy Pangman

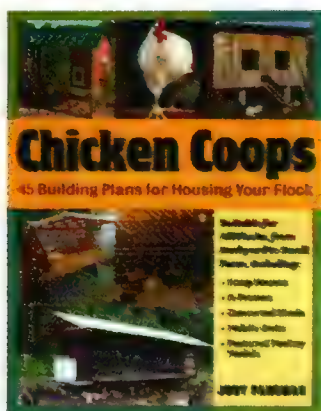
**Published by
Storey Publishing**

**Soft cover, 166 pages,
black and white A4**

**Includes 8 pages
of photo gallery**

\$34.95*

Judy Pangman has travelled far and wide in the United States to bring this amazing collection of hen housing to you. Each chicken coop presented here



is accompanied by a short story explaining how it came to be. Written in true *Earth Garden* friendly style, I'm sure all potential fowl owners will love to browse the many possibilities here.

Coops range from fashionable backyard structures to the more elaborate free-range paddock accommodation. You will find plans to convert trailers to mobile henhouses as well as ideas on converting backyard sheds, play houses and how to include a greenhouse.

This book is really about creative ideas. Take a peek over the neighbours' fence in the colour gallery section where many of these fine chook houses are photographed.

Work with recycled materials, make your own waterers, feeders and nest boxes. Plans include hoop houses, A-frames, mobile units and much more.

Essentially this book is a collection of line drawings coupled with very basic floor plans and construction ideas. With your basic building skills, a little elbow grease and imagination, chook house paradise could be in your backyard or home paddock.

Organic Gardening in Australia

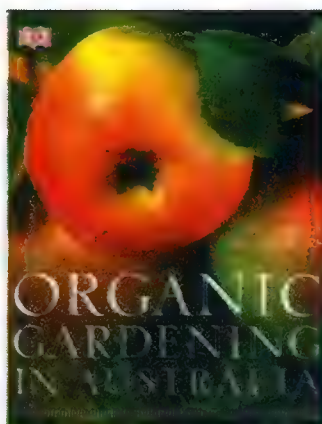
(The Complete Guide to Natural & Chemical-Free Gardening)

Editor In Chief
Pauline Pears

Published by DK Books

Large format, 416 pages,
full colour \$45*

Allen Gilbert and Laurie Cosgrove (Australian horticulturalists) have adapted the book by British author Henry Doubleday, titled *Encyclopaedia of Organic Gardening*, for the Australian audience.



So here we have the DK book on organic gardening. This is a most comprehensive and beautiful book.

Organic gardening is really code for healthy gardens, healthy eating, healthy wildlife, healthy environment and future. Follow the list of gardening 'do's' to begin a healthier path. Encourage wildlife to learn to distinguish pest from predator, make soil care a priority, reuse and recycle, and say no to genetically modified cultivars. These are just a few ideas to get started.

This book is divided into two sections: first, the basics of soil, garden structure and growing fruit, herbs and vegetables; then comes part two — the reference section: A to Z of vegetable and salad crops and A to Z of plant problems. Very much a step-by-step guide, using beautiful photographs, this book demonstrates systems and principles of organic gardening.

Learn about soil management, composting, recycling water and conservation. Look at pest control, propagation and growing under cover. When constructing a garden it's important to consider where your landscaping materials come from. Is the source sustainable?

Use crop planning charts to create the classic kitchen garden. Learn how to train your grapes and prune your fruit trees. I would have to say that this is one of the most accessible and inspiring organic gardening books in a long time. Its time to save that bathwater and grab the garden fork and get out there and do it!

***Books marked with an asterisk are available from the Good Life Book Club by phoning (03) 5424 1814.**

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Advertisers' Index

Australian Business Guides	69	Huff and Puff Constructions.....	33
Aart Bark.....	29	LB Juicers & Healing Products.....	24
Australian Correspondence Schools.....	45	McCallum Made Chicken Tractors	35
Australian Ethical Investment & Superannuation ...	IBC	Natural Paint	42
Bee Green	23	Nature-loo	41
Bindaree Bee Supplies.....	55	Oasis Windmills	43
Bio Products.....	49	Peter Lees.....	37
Candles by Bereden.....	15	Precision Wind Technology.....	59
Castworks.....	64	Rad-Pads	43
Central Strawbale Rendering	39	Rainbow Power Company	57
Cleverlad Shower Heads	17	Rotaloo	15
Clivus Multrum Composting Toilet Systems.....	57	Safe Eco Products	22
Coopers Brewery	OBC	Santos Trading.....	19
Country Spray Render	19	Scandia Stoves & Spares.....	21
Digger's Club	IFC	Schnitzer Mills	21
DP Refrigeration.....	48	Select Organic.....	27
Ecowoodoil	IBC	Solarcharge.....	64
EnviroCare Laundry Balls	37	Solarventi Powered Ventilation	17
Envirotrike	59	Solazone	31
Fair Trade Coffee.....	31	Southern Cross Permaculture Institute	51
Gentle Harmony.....	39	Sun Lizard	65
Geometree.....	63	The Permaforest Trust.....	65
Green Harvest.....	51	The Solar Bloke.....	63
Greenbuild & Eco Show	25	Warm Earth Magazine.....	24
Grimes and Sons.....	33	Waterboy	45
Gudhara Holistic Century.....	23	Wattworks	29
hemp hemp hooray.....	22	WWOOF	49

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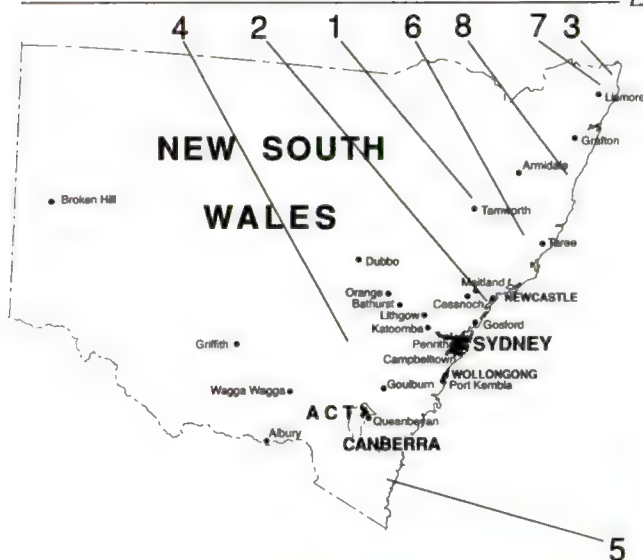
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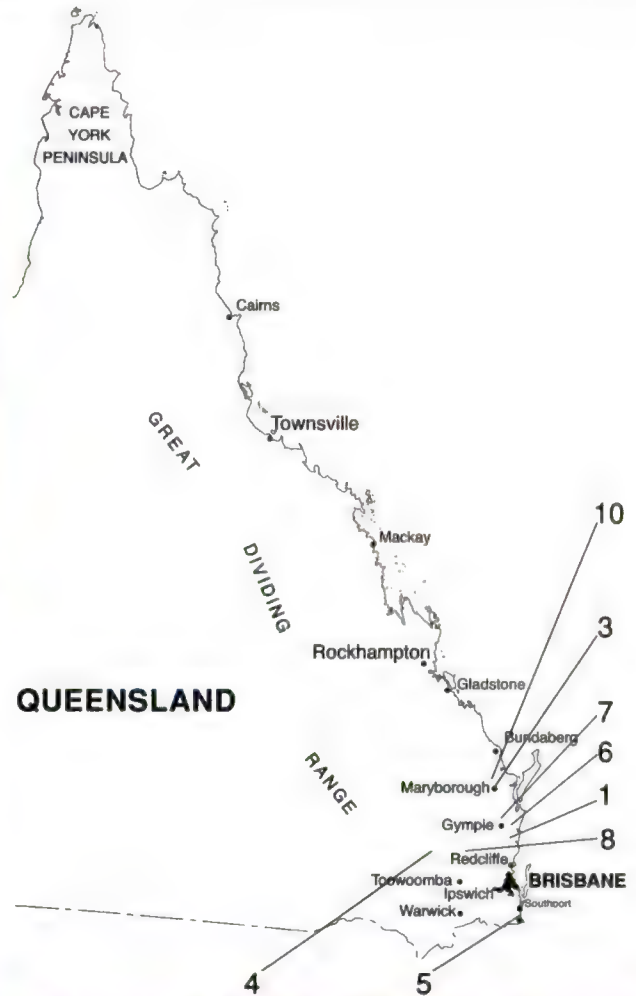


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55 acres, partly cleared, partly timbered. 3 dams and seasonal creek. 18mx9mx3.6m colorbond shed with power. 120 m2 older shed with power, phone & septic. Priced at \$535,000 LN637. Contact Wayne Fewtrell on 0408 450 856. **SEE PHOTO ABOVE.**



8. HUGE DOUBLE STOREY HOUSE on 10 acres near Nanango. Suits large families or social groups, B&B. 6/7 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, 3 toilets, 2 kitchens, wood burner both levels, 2 carports, 3 x 5000gal tanks. Large dam. Fruit trees. Wide variety wildlife. Property uncleared with open section for campfire gatherings. Excellent neighbours. School bus. 10 mins to town, 90 to Toowoomba, 3 hours to Brisbane. \$310,000. Phone (07) 4163 7142. m.frauca@hotmail.com. **SEE PHOTO ABOVE.**



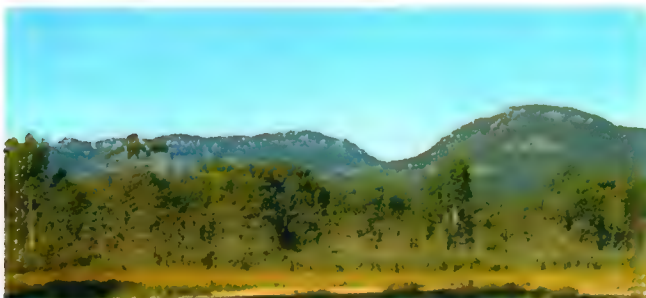
9. EULEILAH \$250,000. An Organic Oasis. 16 ha (40 acres) on the best soil in the region. Split level 2 bedroom home with finishing touches to complete. Work shop with 3 bay car port. A 33ft caravan with annex provides supplementary accommodation. 5 dams all cleverly interlinked so you can pump between them. The top dam gravity feeds the house. Solar power and for larger loads an on demand start generator is distanced from the house. Phone is connected. Of significant value are 150 mature bearing tropical fruit trees. We also have 16 ha vacant land from \$90k and some delightful holiday rentals. DL 3055507 www.organicodyssey.com.au. Ph: (07) 4156 6556. **SEE PHOTO ABOVE.**

10. "MALOCA" AMAZONIAN INDIAN HOUSE 5km north of Childers in SE Qld on 14.9 acres, octagonal, 315 deg. views. True "eco-property", rustic, based on the 3R's principle with Council approval. Wood fire/oven, composting toilet, deck surrounding house, dam, shed, 3 watertanks, fenced, bitumen roads, subdivision possibility, school bus. Rates \$612pa, elec \$30pm. Peace, tranquility, abundant wildlife & birds. \$250,000 Ph: (07) 41263520, email:

margiejessulat@hotmail.com. SEE PHOTO BELOW.



VICTORIA



1. GRAMPIANS - 100 acres adjoining the Grampians National Park. Extensive native flora and fauna including red gums and rare vegetation. Price \$110,000. Phone (03) 9486 9757. Email: sarahandsean@westnet.com.au. SEE PHOTO ABOVE.



2. DUNOLLY, VICTORIA - CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS, 2 hrs from Melbourne. 3 and a half acres, short walk to centre of charming historic village with all amenities. Brand new, energy efficient 3 bedroom house, 105 m2 plus veranda, strawbale and steel, sewerage, water tank, mains power, gas cooker. Flat sandy land, suit vineyard, farmlet, tourism, or subdivide. Giant shady peppercorn tree beside house. Asking \$130,000. Email - info@geomantica.com. SEE PHOTO ABOVE.

3. LYONVILLE, CENTRAL HIGHLANDS VICTORIA. TWO ACRES, SUSTAINABLE 2BR HOME. Backing onto the Wombat Forest, this Land for Wildlife property has everything earth carers want: Sustainably designed and built north-facing timber house (nearly 3 years old) on concrete slab, including open plan living, 2 bedrooms with BIRs, solar hot water, double glazed windows, wet-back wood heater, surrounded by Australian native garden with wonderful birdlife (kookaburras, ducks, blue wrens, etc) and wildlife (kangaroos, occasional koalas and echidnas). Extras include a large dam with an island, water tanks capacity of 78,000 litres, great workshop/studio



with power, water, phone, and toilet, enclosed (roo-proof) organic vegetable garden, fruit trees, compost bins, and other wood, mower, etc. shedding. Lyonville is a well-kept secret between Trentham (5 mins) and Daylesford (12 mins), with Melbourne only 1&1/4 hours away. \$270,000. Phone (03) 5348 5575 after 6pm or email kaydick@myplace.net.au. SEE PHOTO ABOVE.

4. 40 ACRES NEAR TRENTAM, 90km NW Melbourne. Top quality volcanic soil, level block, highway frontage, spring fed dam. Suit organic growers, vineyard etc. Stunning views, good rainfall. \$12,500 per acre negotiable. Vendor terms could be arranged for percentage. (03) 5424 1674.

5. YARRA VALLEY. Chum Creek (6 km from Healesville). 3 bedroom mudbrick home on 1 acre. Private, peaceful location featuring open-plan living, leadlight windows, cathedral ceilings. Natural bush, vegie patch, fruit trees and shedding. \$312,000. Ph: (03) 5674 2326. SEE PHOTO BELOW.



6. TRENTHAM, CENTRAL VICTORIA. ONE ACRE, TWO DWELLINGS. Great lifestyle opportunity, or just the thing for the super fund. Two excellent buildings on one acre. Includes new strawbale building on long, secure lease as an office, but convertible at end of lease to three bedroom dwelling. Energy efficient design, currently leased with options out to 25 years. The second building is an Edwardian weatherboard home, comprising three bedrooms and open plan living/kitchen. Totally renovated with large rear decking. Easy walk to centre of town. One hour to Melbourne; rich, volcanic soil; good rainfall, town water and mains power; quiet location next to forest on edge of town. This property will show a good initial yield with fixed increases on the office that's currently leased. \$410,000 Phone John FitzGerald at FitzGerald Property on (03) 5424 1866, or 0418 518 322. Or see www.fitzgeraldproperty.com.au.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

1. 450 SQ. METRE LEVEL CORNER BLOCK IN AWARD-WINNING ALDINGAARTS ECOVILLAGE, 50 minutes south of Adelaide. Close to beautiful beaches and vineyards. Supportive, creative community, shared facilities, environmental buildings and permaculture farm. \$100,000 ono. Jenny Dupont, 8 Forest Avenue, Hawthorndene, SA, 5051. Ph: 61 (08) 8370 2594. mailto: jendup@hotmail.com.



2. SELICKS BEACH STRAWBALE HOUSE. 70 km south of Adelaide. Modern 2 storey, 3 bedroom, grid connect solar system. Large open living area and kitchen upstairs with baltic pine floors and views. Established, north facing garden with fruit trees. In ground pool, salt chlorinated, solar heated. Offers from \$365,000. View at www.selicksbeachstrawbale.com. Phone owner 0414 963 258. **SEE PHOTO ABOVE.**

3. SOUTH AUSTRALIA. BEAUTIFUL NORTH-FACING BLOCK OF LAND, 2,427 square metres (over 1/2 acres), in Palmer township, 70 km east of Adelaide. All services available, includes enclosed mixed fruit orchard, native shrubs and trees. Sixteen km's to Murray River township of Mannum. \$65,000. Ph: (08) 8569 4208.

4. OLD STONE FARMHOUSE, 310 acres, part cleared, part mallee scrub. Chemical free for 14 years. 15,000 gallons rainwater, bore. Ample sheds. Poultry yards, veggie garden. Secluded, surrounded by heritage properties. Near Purnong; 40 min to Murray Bridge or Mannum, 10 min to river, two hours to Adelaide. \$220,000. Ph: (08) 8570 4262.



5. RIVERLAND, SOUTH AUSTRALIA, 2 SEPARATE TITLES. Imagine a 4891 square metre freehold property in the sunny Riverland of SA with meandering paths through beautiful gardens. Once part-used as a garden centre this block has 6 buildings including an old 'fixer' cottage with 2 added on Lloyds transportables, and a new, large, open, paved, colourbond roof building for outdoor entertaining or shedding etc. Nestled out in the settlement 5 km from town, with ample water allocation from the RIT, this block has huge potential for open-minded buyers. Includes 3 Phase power, chlorine free water, 20 years of composted veggie garden soil and huge water storage tank, owners asking just \$170,000 ONO. Also an adjoining 1.69 hectares (3 acres) with 2-storey home: 4 bedroom, BBQ shed, 5 bay car-port, workshop, established park-like gardens, 15 years chemical free, ample water allocation, suitable for advanced tree farm, horses, vegetables, capers etc. Rare opportunity to buy small acreage with irrigation license, close to choice of schools. Offers for low \$300,000s considered - OR make an offer for both adjoining properties! Email for more photos or information to rozkev@bigpond.com. Or phone Kevin direct 0428 951 399. **SEE PHOTOS ABOVE.**

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

YORK, WA. 86 km NE of Perth CBD. 5 acre vacant land 7 km from York, backs onto Avon River. Lot 2 Top Beverley Road, York, water and electricity, \$150,000 contact Aktubel@yahoo.com.au.

TASMANIA



ROARING BEACH/TASMAN PENINSULA. This secluded and private property of 28 acres has spectacular views over looking Roaring beach, its coastal reserve and beyond to the southern ocean. Our two bedroom, two story timber and stone cottage has heaps of character and only recently renovated with extensive use of Tas oak throughout. There is no mains

power. The property includes two dams, combination of bush and pasture, situated in a year round sunny position and is home to a wide variety of native animals and plant life. Roaring beach is 8 kms from Nubeena, which has all amenities, and 1.5 hrs SE of Hobart \$315,000. Ph: Mike 0438 502 701. **SEE PHOTO ABOVE.**

NEW ZEALAND



NEW ZEALAND South Island. Four bedroom home located 4 km from city centre of Dunedin, with magnificent views across southern suburbs to the Pacific Ocean. This house is low maintenance, solid construction of brick and tile with two toilets and built-in robe to main bedroom. Bright, sunny, elevated location. Land area 646m. Copy of the building inspection is available. Currently rented at \$230 per week, low vacancy rate, good investment, close to city centre and facilities. Great summer holiday destination. No stamp duty required on the purchase/sale of property in NZ, therefore saving you thousands of dollars. \$210,000 ono. Ph: 0412 000 076. **SEE PHOTOS ABOVE.**

FARM SIT / WANTED / TO RENT / SHARE

WANTED - RUSTIC ACCOMODATION in exchange for labour/care-taking/pet-house-sitting. Good water essential, electricity not. We want to grow food. Young family. Ph: 0424 470 787.

SHEEP CHANGE? Occasional farm-sitter/s needed. Small farm, NE Victoria. Ph: (03) 5774 7257.

WANTING PEOPLE TO SHARE my property in Cooroy, Queensland by March 2007. Accommodation is three bedroom 1950s retro house on 11 private acres at \$230 per week. For more information, photos etc call (07) 3357 9505.

QUIET, GARDEN LOVING TENANT WANTED for lovely 100 year old 2br weatherboard cottage in the Huon Valley, 40km south of Hobart.

Large cottage garden, roses, mature trees, plus 13 acre paddock. \$210 pw lease negotiable. Contact Christine Ph: 0414 906 106 acsp@bigpond.com.

GREEN TYPE PEOPLE - Share house. Mud brick. Hunter Valley -Maitland area. iandahodgson@yahoo.com.au or after 6.00pm. Ph: (02) 4930 0209.

WOMAN IN YOUNG FORTIES SEEKING THREE PEOPLE to share/board home on two acres, Euroa, NE. Victoria. Looking for like minded persons with enthusiasm, living self sufficient/alternative lifestyle. Must be vegetarian NS, ND and prefer common interests e.g. Yoga, meditation, organics etc. brig007@optusnet.com.au. Ph: 0429 800 036.

RENTAL three BR with garage well fenced residential block pets welcome. Phillip Island: getdenise2000@yahoo.com.au.

THREE BEDROOM HOME TO RENT (negotiable) in small community, Jackeys Marsh, Tasmania. Solar, mini-hydro, fenced veggie garden. Ph: (03) 6224 6313 beverleyacj@aapt.net.au.

FOR RENT: Farmhouse with acres on Kangaroo Island SA. From Feb 07. Four bed + study brick house, outdoor entertaining area, pool, modern kitchen + woodstove, combustion heater, solar h/w, fenced veg garden & orchard, stables, R-12 school bus at gate \$250/week. Jane Ph: (08) 8559 4258.

WANTED TO RENT/CARETAKE - from Feb 07. Near Adelaide SA (within 1 hr), small property/house for ex-farming couple and 5-yr-old, keen gardener, very tidy. Jane. Ph: (08) 8559 4258.

SHARE HOUSE with room for third person, Lancefield. Walk/ride to town centre. House on large block. \$340 per month. Contact Meggs, meggshp@gmail.com Ph: 5429 1156.

LEASE/RENT AT NEGOTIATED TERMS. Large excellent stone home on two acres, 260 km N of Adelaide. Thirty additional acres optional. Underground tank. Two water tanks for domestic use. Windmill and bore for garden and stock. Bond and references required. Orroroo. Ph: (08) 8658 1321.

LADY MIDDLE-AGED SHARE my small cottage beautiful, sleepy country town Ravenshoe situated high rainforest area tablelands southwest Cairns, North Queensland. Foremost companion, friend. Gardening exchange rent bedroom. \$100 p/w food, shared cooking lifestyle. Great herb garden, self-sufficient vegetables. Gardening work minimal, cottage on 1/8 acre. Ravenshoe in tropics situated 3,000 feet above sea level, Queensland's highest town, very liveable climate, evergreen belt, rich volcanic soil surrounded beautiful permanent streams, lush rainforest filled many species exotic wildlife. Air of alternative to town since logging closed with introduction world heritage rainforests. Someone who travelled, think outside square advantage. Contact Mr Bim Atkinson, (07) 4097 7675 or bim@bigpond.net.au or write 3 Major St, Ravenshoe, Qld, 4888.

VACANT PROPERTY (100acres or more) surrounding Wauchope, NSW. Seeking flexible payment contract. Contact 0434 257 411 / (02) 6679 3020 or kellygalvin@aapt.net.au.

BUSH ACRES with rustic dwelling, fenced with water. NSW Northern Tablelands. \$150,000. Ph: (02) 6775 1880.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA - LAND/KNOCKDOWN WANTED, 1500 square metres to half acre (more OK), quiet location vicinity Balhannah, Oakbank, Woodside, Verdun. Flat to moderately sloping, good North East aspect. Ph: (08) 8201 2011 or m_treffers@hotmail.com.

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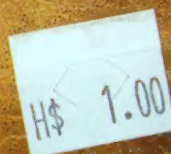
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